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The Editors
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an open letter & response

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CARDINAL BERNARDIN

HAITI: MALNOURISHED REVOLUTION

KAREN SUE SMITH

An interview with film director Alain Cavalier

TOM C

MARKING THE 10th ANNIVERSARY

A CALL TO ACTION

AN UNFINISHED EXPERIMENT

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Correspondence

Art of control

Northampton, Mass.

To the Editors: Bravo to the editors for your lucid and cogent defense of the embattled Seattle archbishop, Raymond Hunthausen ["An Archbishop Wronged," October 10]. During times which are already ominous for the planet, it is consoling to encounter the wisdom your editorial reveals.

Another illuminating source in such matters is the work of the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm. In his late work *To Have or To Be?*, he writes that in conventional theological thinking, disobedience from the church is deemed synonymous with sin. As he puts it, the assumption is: "We do not arrive at well-being by our own productive activity, but by passive obedience and the ensuing approval by the authority." Thus, just as American Catholicism becomes increasingly outspoken and relevant, it seems this is considered behavior (and thought) worthy of punishment by the Vatican.

This also gives an eerie relevance to the words George Orwell uttered in 1948: "We are living in a world in which it is virtually impossible to be honest and remain alive." . . . .

JAY ALLAIN

Popes & bishops

Glen Ellyn, Ill.

To the Editors: The demand for explanation issued by over a hundred Seattle Catholic leaders was not *aptly* titled, "What Kind of Church Are We Becoming?" It should have been titled, "What Kind of Church Have We Become!" In the Latin Church, all bishops have indeed become auxiliaries of the pope *de jure* since Trent; *de facto* for even longer. So what else is new? W.C.C ecumaniacs beware!

FR. KURT A. SPENGLER

We are concerned

Jackson Heights, N.Y.

To the Editors: We, a body of concerned Catholics, lay, priests, and religious, wish to repudiate publicly the recent developments of suppression, intimidation, insult, and shoddy comparisons that have come from some authorities in the Roman Catholic church.

We are loyal members of that church who feel we have a responsibility to let thinking Catholics and others know that the best of the Catholic tradition is ill-served by ecclesiastical bullying on the part of people who do not distinguish between loyal dissent and subversive attack. At the local level, we object to and are embarrassed by Msgr. Peter Finn's equating an invitation to Mario Cuomo to address Catholics with an invitation to Yassar Arafat to address Jews or to P.W. Botha to speak to Blacks. We are ashamed of Finn's apparent attempt to gloss over the repugnant prayer of a police chaplain calling for Governor Cuomo to learn how to execute human beings. We are offended when Bishop Joseph O'Keefe can impute motives to Cuomo's criticism of a diocesan directive and receive no censure, while Cardinal O'Connor feels deeply insulted and morally libeled when an archdiocesan directive is subjected by a public official, John Dearie, to a similar charge of political motivation.

We are sadly disappointed when a Jesuit priest, Terrance Sweeney, is told by his superior to destroy all his research or face expulsion from the Jesuits. We had hoped for more from an order known for its appreciation of intellect.

We are even more chagrined to learn that 25 percent of the U.S. bishops surveyed by that Jesuit apparently do not feel courageous enough to state publicly that they favor optional celibacy for the clergy and that 8 percent of his respondents feel too timid to reveal their favorable position on the ordination of women.

We are most appalled by the treatment accorded Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle and Fr. Charles Curran of Catholic University, the former for demonstrating pastoral concerns in his diocese, the latter for articulating them in theological forums.

We object strongly to the lack of due process in these cases as well as to the manner in which the Vatican reacted to the signers of the controversial October 7, 1984 ad in the *New York Times*. Let no one twist the intent of this letter so as to use it to support abortion on demand. We believe that the U.S. bishops deserve high praise for their early and consistent defense of innocent human life in the womb. What we object to are the strong-arm tactics of some churchmen who reflect the Vatican policy that is all too ready to draw on the ugly and shameful tactics of the past in suppressing freedom of thought and speech on certain issues.

To our sister and brother Catholics, we hope that our words have offered some reasons to continue to hope and to resist the abuse of power.

To those who do not share our faith, we hope we have given evidence that a thinking adult Catholic is not a contradiction in terms.

We call on the churchmen mentioned herein to work with all the people of God in a context of mutual respect and dialogue. Without this collaboration, the moral credibility of the church will suffer further erosion, as will its prophetic witness to society.

(SR.) CAMILLE D'ARIENZO
(REV.) EDWARD F. DOHERTY
(SR.) KATHLEEN QUINN
(REV.) PAUL SURLIS
JOANN KRAUS
INGRID RAMOS

The road not taken

Roswell, N. Mex.

To the Editors: Even before the bubbles

(Continued on page 696)

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A TUMOR DEEPLY LODGED

"CLEARLY, MISTAKES WERE made," allows George Bush. "Well, very clearly it was a mistake to get involved in the illegal arms transfer—or funds transfer," admits Secretary of State Shultz. "I didn't make a mistake," President Reagan insists at first, then concedes, "It's obvious that the execution of these policies was flawed, and mistakes were made."

One of the more fatuous things about the Iran-*contra* spiracy scandal is the fondness of officials for describing it in terms of "mistakes" rather than, say, lies or crimes. The other fatuity is the idea that President Reagan can put the whole matter right simply by coming clean with the public, the way little George Washington did with his Dad about the cherry tree. The media and other politicians have acquiesced in these pretenses, partly so as not to seem partisan, partly out of genuine fear for the institutional reverberations of incapacitating yet another presidency through public exposure. But the two notions are disturbing: they add one more fallacy to the wallow of mummery and dissimulation into which the nation has fallen.

The new fallacy is the notion that the Iran-*contra* connection is a development extrinsic to the Reagan presidency. Quite the contrary. What has emerged—and every day brings new revelations—are policies thoroughly in keeping with this administration's characteristic outlook and methods of operation. What we have to confront is no ugly blemish on the surface but a tumor deeply lodged in a vital organ.

How can an anti-terrorist government, it is asked, barter arms with the funders and outfitters of terrorists? The truth is that the administration's proclamations, first on "international terrorism," later on "state-supported terrorism," were, from the blustering days of General Haig, two parts propaganda to one part policy. They were always imprecise and malleable concepts, applicable when and where desired, and mainly designed to focus onto the Soviet Union the horror properly felt at the violence randomly dealt out to innocents by terrorists. Inconsistency was never an embarrassment to this administration, which indignantly denounced Cuba's or Nicaragua's support for insurgents in Central America while reserving the right to intervene with such support itself.

"When I use a word," said Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, "it means just what I choose it to mean." The Reagan administration has been of the Humpty-Dumpty school of thought. The *contras* were "freedom fighters" and the moral equivalent of America's Founding Fathers. "Imminent threats to national security" could be declared by fiat, as in the embargo imposed on Nicaragua. Assessments of vital national interests could be turned on or off like a spigot, as in Lebanon. Principled refusals to compromise with national security in the case of arms budgets became highly adjustable matters when the farm vote required a grain deal with the Soviets. A Strategic Defense Initiative was suddenly catapulted by an ill-prepared presidential speech into a position commanding much of U.S. arms policy—without even a

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careful delineation of what was meant.

What is involved here is a cast of mind. A cast of mind that holds, "We know what is right", and therefore explanation is a purely after-the-fact operation, a rationale that sells the policy rather than goes into its formulation. Here is moral righteousness leading to a routine substitution of rhetoric for reality. The president who runs up the biggest deficit in U.S history and also campaigns for a balanced budget amendment is the president who can say, no, we didn't trade Mr. Daniloff for a Soviet spy; who can recreate Reykjavik the morning after; who can declare, "It was not my intent to do business with Khomeini, to trade weapons for hostages, nor to undercut our policy on anti-terrorism," even as he is doing them all—and whose secretary of state can lecture Persian Gulf nations on the Iranian arms embargo even when knowing the U.S. was violating it.

The Iran-*contra*spiracy has further roots in this administration's penchant for secret, military operations. Why the right has historically conceived of the Communist enemy as essentially conspiratorial — and constructed its counter-strategy in a kind of mirror image — is a long story. The mundane fact remains that the Reaganites entered office convinced that Jimmy Carter had shackled the CIA and that America still suffered from a bad case of "Vietnam syndrome" — a reluctance to use military power overseas. They prescribed a healthy dose of both secrecy and military force. If that seemed like strong medicine, the administration hard-liners appeared to be all the more delighted. The Grenada invasion, the Libyan air strikes, and the *contra* war were the chief fruits of this policy, but it also encompassed a number of covert operations about which we will probably now be learning more. The secrecy, in most cases, was directed against American public opinion as much as against the adversary. The road to those Swiss bank accounts, the too-clever-by-half deals with both sides of the deadly Iran-Iraq war, the daily contradictions, admissions, and retractions started in 1981, not 1985.

BEHIND THIS administration's demagogic words and secret acts is a deep distrust of democracy. When the going gets tough, the tough get undemocratic. If Congress refuses to fund the *contra* war which the administration planned, if the public has no stomach for slipping arms to the folks responsible for killing 241 Marines unawares in their barracks, then those who know better will find a way. The democratic process will be superseded by a shadowy world of White House advisors, CIA agents, and semi-official gunrunners, where duplicity is standard operating procedure and you can't tell the liars without a scorecard.

It is naive to think that Ronald Reagan can somehow kiss away the wounds his administration has inflicted on the Constitution and on U.S. foreign policy by "telling all" and fingering those responsible. To begin with, such a hope underestimates how deep the rot goes and what blurry lines may divide those who knew from those who didn't. But in the end, the president himself is a major part of the problem, and not only because he may have actually made decisions now being unloaded on subordinates.

Ronald Reagan has certainly tapped wells of trust and affection in the American people. Even if, in our heart of hearts, America didn't stand quite as tall as he said (who could miss the poverty and homelessness, the promotion of mergers rather than of manufacturing, the private and public debt?), at least *he* stood tall. A bit dotty perhaps (and willing to joke about it), a bit casual with the truth, certainly detached from rudimentary details, yet emanating confidence, with those remarkably broad shoulders and that puckish look suggesting that even the worst catastrophe is only a second away from a grin and a wisecrack.

SHOULD WE bemoan the fact that the president has betrayed the trust so readily placed in him — and imagine that it can be restored? Or should the country face the harder fact that this trust was never deserved in the first place? Certainly Mr. Reagan has raised haziness about the specifics of policy to an art form. Nonetheless, he has charted the main directions of this administration. He has chosen his inner circle for their personal and ideological loyalty and he has been remarkably loyal to them in turn. (What can one say about a Chief Executive who naturally turns, when his office is threatened by the taint of illegality, to Michael Deaver and Richard Nixon?) He has set the tone for foreign policy, particularly in regard to Central America. Conservatives have constantly urged, "Let Reagan be Reagan." In the Iran-*contra*spiracy, Reagan was Reagan, with results that we have only begun to recognize.

This is not to say that the problems driving so many people to ask for a freshened-up President Trust-Me are not very real ones. On the fifth anniversary of the Soviets' own successful *contra* operation against Solidarity in Poland, the temptation Moscow might see in a demoralized and leaderless America cannot be ignored. The already tattered alliances in Europe and the Middle East are not going to be helped by a period of prolonged crisis. Most ominous, of course, is the effect on America's own political fabric. It is bad enough that 53 percent of the people do not believe the president's denial of knowledge about the diversion of arms money to the *contras*. But the current measure of citizen cynicism was taken by the same poll when it found that an even higher 59 percent believe Mr. Reagan is more honest and trustworthy than most people in public life.

Still, the answer is not be found in a fresh coat of Teflon. Mr. Reagan and his current advisors are *not* to be trusted. The president should clean house, yes. But the key to future trust is not what officials he dismisses but what officials he puts in their place. Obviously, they need not be Democrats. They must be democrats.

In keeping with its usual holiday practice, *Commonweal* publishes one less issue at the end of the year. The next issue will be dated January 16, 1987.

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MAKING OUR MOVE

This is *Commonweal*'s first Christmas at 15 Dutch Street, New York, NY 10038. Most of our readers have received letters describing the economic realities that led to this move from the offices on Madison Avenue where we were quartered for the past twenty-five years. Writing last May, we explained our plight and pretty much placed our fate in the hands of our readers. We needed, that letter said,

- A handful of supporters willing to make sizable contributions—of $1,000 or more—this year and if possible to continue that level of giving on request through the decade.
- An armload of others willing to become Commonweal Associates by contributing between $75 and $200 (or more) in 1986, and to make non-binding pledges to repeat such gifts in the "out years."
- A platoon or a company or a regiment of friends sending us single contributions of $10, $25, or $50.

The response to this appeal was generous. By and large, we received what we had asked for, or even more than we had asked for. *Commonweal* continues to be a shoestring operation, but the journal will not go into the new year either homeless or penniless.

Recently, however, we have been reproached by some of our most loyal friends and supporters. It seems that a few of them never received word of our move—or of our appeal for help. How could this be? In some cases, lost mail. But in most cases, it turns out, these are readers who receive their subscriptions through their offices or agencies, and our mailing house's computers have coded their addresses among the many libraries or other institutions that receive *Commonweal*. Because only those subscribers coded as individual subscriptions received our letters of appeal, other readers were left in the dark.

Of course, we are overjoyed to enlighten them—and anyone else who might be interested in coming to the magazine's aid. Here is the story, very briefly: *Act One:* We lose our lease, at least at any price we could afford. *Act Two:* We find a new location for our office, at a very attractive rent. *Act Three:* We shell out over $60,000 in order to renovate the new space and make the move. *Act Four:* We beg and borrow (but not steal, even if our new offices are quite a bit closer to Wall Street) that sum. We are like patients after very successful surgery—on our feet, overjoyed about the outcome, but a little wobbly and feeling short of blood. There are a few aspects of outfitting our new office space yet to be completed—and yet to be paid for. But mostly the move is behind us, and we can get back to the "normal" crises, like dealing with the annual deficit. A hearty Christmas thanks to all who responded when we asked—and to any who, only hearing of our move now, would still like to.

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

TRUTH FLASHES

WHAT'S RIGHT ABOUT JIMMY SWAGGART

I AM probably as guilty as the next vaguely liberal guy of sneering at a particular sort of fundamentalist Christian. My catalogue of what bothers me about fundamentalists is fairly long and detailed. There are certainly decent evangelicals—people like Senator Mark Hatfield, or the people around the Sojourners fellowship, who combine a lively concern with biblical Christianity and social action.

Calling this "decent" is a bit condescending, but that's part of my point too: we always condescend, always assume that our religious or political point of view is quite simply the one from which others ought to be judged. The assumption of being right is what unites a lot of Catholic Workers, *Wanderer* readers, ACLU members, Moral Majority folks, Sojourners, and people on opposite sides of the table over coffee after Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant services all over the country every Sunday morning. It is hard to imagine an alternative to the idea that we are right—certainly no one would proceed from the assumption that he or she was wrong, and it looks just plain wimpy to mount an argument while pleading that the possibility of our being mistaken be simultaneously taken into account. One of my favorite quotes is from Gregory of Nyssa. "Concepts create idols," he wrote, "only wonder comprehends anything." I agree with that, but what do you *do* with it?

It could be that worrying about what we ought to do is a central part of our problem; instead, we should worry more about what we ought to be, and that concern has something to do with Gregory of Nyssa's concern for wonder and what it could lead us to comprehend.

And that brings me to Jimmy Swaggart, and also to Flannery O'Connor, and to needs people really have.

Some mornings on one television station we can get around here I am able to see Jimmy Swaggart's Bible study, and some evenings on another one I am able to see him sweat and sing and shout and dance in front of an auditorium full of people. I can't stand his smugness, his self-righteousness, his bigotry. What seems like bigotry to me is simple theology to him: Jews and mainstream Christians and other people who don't get saved will go to hell, and it isn't his fault or his harsh decision, it's God's will for all those poor non-Pentecostals whose theology isn't a version of Augustine's at its worst (though Jimmy thinks he finds it

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in Scripture alone, since that's the way he has to think). The man really is pig-ignorant, as stupid about the limitations of his own very recent version of old-time religion as a man could be and still be able to get dressed in the morning and tie his own shoes. I remember hearing him one morning talk about the dying words of a famous atheist, and I couldn't remember ever having heard of Voll Terry, and then I realized that he meant Voltaire. His misrepresentations of what Catholics believe are either willful or ignorant, and they are dangerous because a lot of people seem to think he's telling the truth.

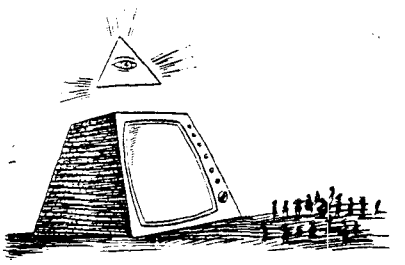
But the trouble with a lot of us, especially those of us who read a lot and have vaguely liberal convictions, is that we think of our opponents as stupid, or find the emotionalism of someone like Swaggart embarrassing, and fail completely to see that someone could be drawn in that direction for reasons we may not understand as sympathetically as we should.

One thing strikes me when I watch Swaggart, and it is something I don't find in any other TV evangelist. A form of right-wing politics definitely flows from his sort of belief and preaching, but it doesn't quite seem central to it, nor does he use the Bible primarily to justify his politics. He is wrong about a lot of things, terribly wrong, but he seems to be a man who thinks that the Bible is true, and that what can be found in it is meant to transform us.

This is the claim which embarrasses us, or part of us. When someone says the Bible is true the conversation immediately degenerates: well, how is it true, and does that mean it is literally true or does it mean the general direction of the Bible is correct, or that it is to be read allegorically? All of us, fundamentalists, higher critics, conservatives, liberals, radicals, neo-orthodox, evade the burning bush and the prophets and Job and Jesus, as if the book itself had ceased to impress us, except as it offers us the grounds for a good fight. This makes me wonder what people could possibly mean when they speak of the Bible as literature and mean by this a safe, non-religious approach to Scripture, because literature as we experience it where it matters is not something we muse about and take at arm's length. If literature is any good it changes us on its own terms, not on the terms we bring to it. You don't walk into *The Brothers Karamazov* armed and ready; you walk in as you are, and you are changed or you are not. The Bible should be at least that powerful, and yet for many of us the Bible has become—perhaps for reasons of imagined familiarity—the least likely book to become like an avalanche or an earthquake or an encounter with the burning bush, and this should strike us as, at least, a cultural tragedy.

I have always found it interesting that Flannery O'Connor, without moving an inch from her profound Catholic belief, usually chose evangelical, biblically fundamentalist Protestants as her archetypical Christians. This could be because at certain levels—the ones which interested O'Connor, as an artist and as a Christian—the choices we find presented by Christianity really do involve the dramatic either/or decisions, the radical choices emphasized in Swaggart's kind of preaching. Swaggart's own cousin, the country-rock singer Jerry Lee Lewis, sincerely believes that he has chosen the way of the devil—a life full of booze, drugs, and bad marriages. Lewis has said in interviews that unless he gets saved he fully believes that he will be damned. Swaggart agrees, and says he prays for Jerry Lee.

In O'Connor's *The Lame Shall Enter First*, a liberal social worker named Sheppard tries hard to help a crippled boy who has been in an out of trouble with the law. He tells the boy, who believes in a tough and fundamentalist version of Christianity, that there is no hell—which leads the boy later on to say that Sheppard made immoral suggestions to him. The boy, like Jimmy Swaggart's cousin, believes that he is in the power of Satan, and says that Sheppard is too; the difference, the saving difference, is that the boy knows it. He sees adulterous pretensions in Sheppard's attempts to save him. "I lie and steal," he says, "because I'm good at it! My foot don't have a thing to do with it! The lame shall enter first! The halt'll be gathered together. When I get ready to be saved, Jesus'll save me, not that lying, stinking atheist..."



There is more to the story than this, but reading it I thought of Swaggart and some of the other preachers who embarrass us, usually because they are so dreadfully wrong and over-simple, but sometimes because they come close to the truth, to the fact that there are moments in our lives when we really must make choices that are just as simple and demanding, and finally saving as the ones these preachers rant and rave about. There are times when the the choices are between good and evil, God and Satan, life and death, and we would rather avoid this. It makes us embarrassed in a pluralistic culture to say that the culture itself, good as it has been to us, good as it has been for religion, is limited, and our lives finally are not. We are in danger when we draw definite political programs from this, and there is little doubt that flinty Jimmy Swaggart will be in there applauding the oleaginous Pat Robertson when the God who talks to Pat finally gets his presidential campaign rolling. Too much of his message is not only less prophetic than he would have us believe, but it blesses the greed and violence which moves our society along. We have to make sure, though, that when we distance ourselves, as we should, from a Jimmy Swaggart that we aren't embarrassed by the flashes of truth that can be found in tough evangelism. It may be oversimplified, and it is too often a departure-point for bigotry and extremism, but the relativism of a lot of modern secular folks is more distant from what is best in Christian tradition than even embarrassing, sweaty, weird Jimmy Swaggart is. Flannery O'Connor knew this. Jesus really does present us with hard choices, and they may make us look funny to some of our friends. To the extent that Jimmy Swaggart says this he is, damn it all to hell, telling the truth.

JOHN GARVEY

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Church/world watch

From ignorance, to incoherence, to collapse

J. Bryan Hehir

WHEN THE new Congress arrives in January, it will encounter an administration in nearly total disarray on foreign affairs. Between Labor Day and Thanksgiving a foreign-policy apparatus that had raised ignorance and ad-hoc improvisation to the status of operating principles collapsed. What George Will called the "lunatic parley" of arms sales to Iran and the diversion of the profits to the Nicaraguan *contras* has exposed the administration's policy as incompetent, incoherent, out of control, and lacking congressional consent.

The Iranian-*contra* connection has, of course, focused public attention on who-knew-what-when, but it is the larger framework of policy disarray that needs to be addressed as we approach 1987.

The disintegration began when the president fought to the end congressional passage of new economic sanctions against South Africa. The rare sight of Congress overriding a presidential veto left administration policy on South Africa shattered. Although the effort to recast policy began with an address by Secretary Shultz in early December, the New Year will open with sanctions in place but no coherent U.S. policy to sustain them.

South Africa absorbed much of the nation's attention during the summer. Autumn brought nuclear questions back to center stage. Congress was again in the driver's seat. The House version of the defense authorization bill contained several amendments that would have forced the president's hand on issues from SALT II limits to nuclear testing. The "mini-summit" at Reykjavik short-circuited this second face-off. However, Reykjavik displayed the ad-hoc character that caught up with the administration in the final months of 1986; it was less a planned summit than a preemptive strike staged just prior to the mid-term elections. Undoubtedly, Mr. Gorbachev needed the summit for domestic purposes at least as badly as Mr. Reagan.

The expected outcome of Reykjavik—an agreement on intermediate-range missiles in the European theater—was superseded by proposals to abolish all intercontinental ballistic missiles and/or nuclear weapons. While it is not clear that Mr. Gorbachev planned this scenario in detail, the negotiations read like a poker game; and the Reagan administration found itself bidding for stakes it had not carefully considered.

For much of his presidency, Mr. Reagan has confounded his critics with sweeping proposals that cut across a prevailing consensus. Reykjavik is a case in point. The president now stands both to the left and to the right of the arms-control community, which has traditionally accepted nuclear weapons as a fact of life and then struggled with how to limit their numbers and safeguard against their use. Mr. Reagan's willingness to trade away all ballistic missiles went to the left of the Freeze Movement, itself on the outer edge of the arms-control consensus. But Reagan's fascination with Star Wars stood to the right of the conventional wisdom on arms control. This time, in spite of the public-relations effort that followed Reykjavik, the president's gambit failed. Neither the allies, nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nor the Congress—was ready for a nuclear-free world, or even for the more modest goal of a world without ballistic missiles. Reagan and Secretary Shultz had to shuffle back from the policy implications of Reykjavik toward cutting strategic weapons in half. Meanwhile the Soviets reiterated their view that SDI remained an obstacle to any deal, whether on strategic or European-theater forces. To sum up, the results of Reykjavik are less a breakthrough in negotiations than a break-up of the policy consensus needed to negotiate a signficant reduction in arms.

Of course, the far-reaching proposals for displacing nuclear weapons from center stage in the superpower relationship were a dramatic new contribution to the chronically cautious style of arms-control negotiations. They may bear fruit someday, and Reykjavik would then be recognized as a watershed in the nuclear age. But before Reykjavik, the administration had clearly not begun the political and strategic hard work needed to support such a master stroke, nor has the work been evident since.

The epitome of the administration's penchant for solving substantive issues with ad-agency tactics is clearly the Iranian-*contra* connection. Here tactics ran wild; clandestine choices, devoid of a policy framework, circumvented congressional restraints and produced a policy fiasco that is now a presidential crisis.

Knowing these tactics are indefensible, defenders of aid to the *contras* have quickly tried to separate the objective (aid to the *contras*) from the tactics. The call is to debate the policy "on its own merits." The challenge should be accepted.

The merits of the policy are marginal. The begrudging congressional approval of *contra* aid was based less on any merits than on the word of the president. The current shambles of our foreign policy allows us to judge the aid for what it has always been: ill-conceived and irresponsibly managed.

It is time for a full-scale policy review of the questionable goals and conflicting means that have brought us to the disarray of December 1986.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

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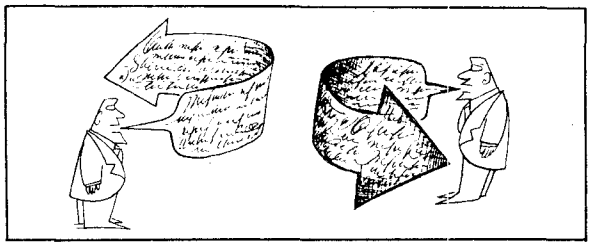
Gay rights/gay plight

AN OPEN LETTER TO CARDINAL BERNARDIN — & A RESPONSE



SEX & PERSON

STEPHEN ELRED

YOUR EMINENCE:

For several weeks this summer, local newspapers were filled with reports and commentary on the "gay rights" legislation which at the time suffered defeat in the Chicago City Council. In that you emerged as an important catalyst for opposition to that measure, I am sure that you were aware of the many Christians who supported it for pastoral or humanitarian reasons. As I watched the debate unfold, I was struck by the failure of many religious proponents to address your objections to the statute's moral implications. They seemed to assume that civil rights can exist only in an atmosphere of suspended moral judgment, as though the notion of human dignity were itself the fruit of a "value-free" soil.

Although I believe that law and morality are intrinsically related, I also believe that your position on this issue was based on faulty moral reasoning. Simply put, I do not accept the church's attempt to distinguish (nay, sunder) homosexual orientation from homosexual activity. Scholars such as John McNeill have already provided solid theoretical grounds for such dissent, and I do not intend to duplicate their efforts in this limited space. Rather, I hope to contribute to the dialogue you have sought by speaking from the perspective of a gay Catholic.

I regret that I will not be able to share all of myself in the process. I will, of course, be stating my true beliefs, but I will not be doing so under my own name. This is necessary because I am a member of a religious community, and I teach religion in a local Catholic high school. Moreover, I was "out of the closet" at the time that I entered my community, and I have continued to celebrate my gay identity within religious life. Let me be quick to reassure you: I have never been promiscuous. I am totally serious about the vow of celibacy that I have now taken, and I am considered a model of discretion in dealing with the adolescent boys whom I teach. Even so, if my identity were to be revealed, you would be pressured to take action against me, and I don't think I owe anything to the lynch-mobs which are currently wreaking havoc in the church.

To return to my main point: I reject your distinction between orientation and activity not because it affects what I *do*, but because it attacks what I *am*. After years of suffering, doubt, study, and prayer, I am convinced that the desires of my heart and loins are "of God"; they are not morally neutral, they are morally *good*, equal in dignity to those of my heterosexual brothers and sisters. Coming to accept this, which I admit is clearly contrary to church teaching, was probably the hardest thing I ever did. But my decision has yielded fruits which I can only associate with the Holy Spirit: love, peace, joy, patience, and even self-control.

In short, I do not think that it is tenable to expect anyone (gay *or* straight) to partition sexuality off from spirituality. Although I personally have been called to forgo a genital expression of my sexuality, I cannot believe that a loving God would put 10 percent of the population in the bind that you propose. For what *are* you saying to gay people?

> You are a child of God, but we will protect your civil rights *only* if you systematically conceal and repress your deepest feelings.
>
> You need not feel guilty about your sexuality, but you may not claim it, integrate it, or express it. If you try to do so, we will leave you prey to the hostility of anyone who finds you inconvenient or unacceptable.
>
> We are eager to accept you, provided that you never reveal or affirm who you really are.

I know that you would never speak as harshly as this, but can you deny that these conclusions flow from your premises?

Please understand that I am not impugning your motives in speaking out as you did. Indeed, I was touched by your recent remark that "They [gay people] may write me off [as a result of this stand], but I can never write them off. They are a part of the flock for which I am responsible." Have you ever stopped to consider, though, that what you are asking gay people to do

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is to write *themselves* off? I truly believe that you are a shepherd who would die for his flock, but what you are expecting of certain "sheep" amounts to psycho-spiritual suicide.

I realize, too, that you are not arguing for a blanket condemnation of individuals. You are careful to note that subjective factors may lessen responsibility for an act which is deemed objectively wrong. But again, this is a horse that won't ride. Do you know what it's like to have your identity treated as a "problem" or a "weakness?" Brian McNaught once bitterly analyzed the anomaly: if you admit to a priest that you have freely and happily entered into a monogamous relationship with someone of the same sex, you can be denied the sacraments because you lack a "firm purpose of amendment"; whereas you can sleep with a different person every night of the week and still receive absolution anytime that you promise to "try not to fall again." In other words: work to constructively integrate your sexuality, and we will cut you off at the knees; admit that you are "sick," and "mercy" will be yours. This is not pastoral compassion; it is functional condescension.

ADMITTEDLY, what I have outlined so far raises more questions than it answers. Permit me to now respond to those which I can anticipate:

● This seems to be asking for special privileges for gay people. Isn't the church simply asking of them what it asks of single people, the widowed, and the divorced?

On one level, yes. The church asks that any sexual activity be situated within a stable bond of mutual fidelity. That is the only adequate expression of the meaning of sexuality, of *anybody's* sexuality.

On another level, however, the comparison breaks down. Single and widowed people are considered free to marry, and through annulment procedures the church attempts to provide the divorced with an opportunity to pick up the pieces and try again. The desire of the heterosexual publicly to belong to someone is celebrated.

Now consider for a moment what happens to a similar desire on the part of a gay person: it is simply trashed. Gay people are not only asked to exercise the ordinary virtue of chastity; they are cut off from the possibility of ever seeing their interpersonal lives validated by the larger community.

● But gay sexuality lacks the procreative dimension, which the church considers integral to sexual expression.

Yes, it does, but so does marriage between the infertile, and those beyond childbearing age. I am not aware of the church enjoining continence on *them*. If our categories of moral praxis can be stretched to accommodate the non-normative experience of some, then why are we so rigid about the non-normative experience of others? In the one case we make exceptions on the basis of physical factors beyond our control. Can we not make exceptions on the basis of psychological factors which we also admit are beyond the realm of choice?

● But this is against the church's constant teaching.

It is true that the church has never condoned homosexual behavior, but recent scholarship strongly indicates that the church's response to homosexuality (and the rationale for that response) has varied remarkably over the centuries. The very distinction between orientation and activity on which much current teaching hinges was unknown in the last century.

I think it is time to face the fact that we know very little about homosexuality, and that church teaching has tended to reflect and reinforce the ignorant prejudices of the heterosexual majority. If the church is ever to articulate a theology of sexuality in which gay people can *live*, it is imperative that the lived experience of gay people be treated as a primary datum; to settle for anything less than that would be to continue our complicity in oppression.

Let me hasten to add, however, that in calling for a time of listening I am also envisioning the process as a two-way street. There is a wisdom in the church's tradition with which gay experience needs to be in dialogue. As stated above, I believe that fidelity and self-sacrifice are ideals applicable to *any* sexual relationship. I would go even further and suggest that gay couples are obliged to go beyond the "normal" parameters of procreation to consider the larger issue of generativity in their commitment to one another.

People need to be reminded, again and again, that the desire to make love to a person of the same sex is *not* inextricably tied to pederasty, sado-masochism, pornography, promiscuity, or any of the other destructive behaviors which they rightly fear. Insofar as a person is prone to these, he or she should be challenged to grow more in conformity to perennial ideals of mutuality. To assume that sexual orientation itself is part and parcel of these aberrations is a fatal confusion of issues.

● But the civil rights legislation does not recognize these distinctions. If enacted, wouldn't it rob businesses, schools, and church organizations of their protections from truly offensive behavior?

I claim no expertise in the area of civil rights law, but it seems to me that many of society's worst fears in this regard are addressed by certain "common-sense" norms of conduct which have never been seriously challenged in the courts. A gay bank executive, for example, might reasonably be compelled to leave a leather body-harness at home and to wear a suit and tie to work. A gay school teacher who discusses the intimate details of his sexual life with his students can (and should) be fired for unprofessional conduct.

It is worth remembering, too, that the majority of gay people have aspirations strikingly similar to those of straight people. So much time and emotional energy has been expended wondering what would happen to Western Civilization if "they" were permitted to come out into the light! If "they" did, you would discover that most gay people are preoccupied with monthly mortgage payments and getting home in time to start the spaghetti.

● Some of the more extreme activists, however, would use their expanded freedoms to flaunt a repugnant life-style. Don't people have a right to shield themselves from this, and to protect their children from its influences? Also, how could the church maintain its right to safeguard the moral standards of its schools and agencies if the gay life-style in general were

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accorded legal protection?

This is an important set of concerns, one which is faced every time a neo-Nazi group petitions to march through a predominantly Jewish suburb, and every time a concerned parents' group demands the banning of a classic in world literature because they consider it obscene. From its earliest years, our republic has had to balance the fundamental values of the majority against the claims of strident minorities. The key to that process, however, has been *balance*, not the wholesale repression of anyone who is tangentially related to "the problem." Imagine the hue and cry if we "solved" the problem of neo-Nazism by suspending the Bill of Rights, or if we dealt with the vagaries of child custody by abolishing divorce. Yet we refuse to guarantee the minimal rights of millions of people because (we believe) our culture would crumble if a handful of "them" decided to "act out." I *do* think that our system of government has proven itself capable of more nuanced solutions.

I would also like to comment on the "contagion" and the seductive "magic" which we impute to homosexuality, such that we fret so about its impact on our children. First, let me reaffirm that I support the automatic firing of any teacher who engages in sexually-suggestive behavior. Second, let me say how offended I am that gay teachers are perceived to be especially prone to this vice, when in fact the majority of child molesters are heterosexual. Third, I would like to offer both a reassurance and a lament about a child's ability to be influenced. The good news is that adolescents are well-nigh impervious to things which do not interest them, and homosexuality holds no interest for a teenager who is "straight." The bad news is that many gay teenagers who *do* want advice are "cut adrift" in their formative years because mature and ethically-responsible gay teachers find it too risky to reach out to them as potential role models. How I wish that somebody had been there for me!

In short, I think that American attitudes toward gay people are a lot like the child who thinks he has a monster under his bed: it's time to take a deep breath, to take a good look at what's really there, and then to begin to let go of all the irrationalities. We are morally bound to do so as Americans, in that our system of government claims to protect individuals from the tyranny of the majority. We are doubly bound as Christians. For too long the church has sought to insulate itself from the pain and ambiguity of the homosexual. For too long its leadership has sought a high and safe ground from which it could "talk at" the shadows which it found frightening. If we continue to do so, we will forfeit our claim to be following Him Who made Himself vulnerable to unpredictable sinners.

I REALIZE that many of the changes in teaching and policy which I am proposing are not yours to effect single-handedly. I will count these words successful if they provoke you to think again about the issues, issues which are so very important to me and to all of the others who have been disenfranchised spiritually and politically.

However profound our disagreement on this matter, please be assured of my reverence for you as my bishop, and of my prayers for your difficult work.

Your brother in Christ,
STEPHEN ELRED

I, TOO, STRUGGLE

JOSEPH L. BERNARDIN

DEAR STEPHEN:

I thank you for your thoughtful and respectful letter. I want to acknowledge the deep feelings you convey and the significant concerns you raise. Before I address the latter, I'd like to share some personal thoughts about your presentation.

Because I too struggle to live the Gospel faithfully and without compromise, I feel real empathy for your effort to be faithful to yourself and to your vocation. I respect the integrity with which you seem to have claimed your homosexual identity and embraced your celibate religious life. And aware of the many people — heterosexual and homosexual — who are touched by aspects of the current debates on the issues you raise, I share your concern that they be addressed respectfully, calmly, and truthfully.

We both belong to a pilgrim people, a people on the way, a people who have not yet arrived, who still struggle, stumble, and fall. But, as pilgrims, both of us are also guided by a promise and hope held in God's hands — our future together in him. In hope we trust that what may divide us now will then be overcome — though even here and now we both must strive to overcome what divides us.

I will not explore every point you raise, but I'd like to take up three areas which your letter addresses: how homosexuality is viewed in our culture; the church's theology of sexuality as it relates to the spirituality of homosexuals; and the drafting of gay/lesbian civil rights legislation.

1. Homosexuality and U.S. culture

It certainly is true that many people in our culture neither understand nor appreciate what it means to be homosexual. This lack of understanding may be expressed simply as fear of the unknown or it may be expressed as bias or bigotry. In either case, the result is that those who are homosexual experience a certain exclusion — they are sometimes forced to live on the fringes of society.

The church's response to this situation is twofold. First, there is need for an "education to differentiation" which breaks down stereotypical patterns of thinking about other people. Jesus proclaimed, and we continue the proclamation, that all people are endowed with full human dignity and value because they are created and redeemed in love and have a high destiny in God.

The labels "gay," "straight," "heterosexual,"

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"homosexual" can obscure more than they clarify. A heterosexual orientation is not in itself a guarantee of moral goodness nor is a homosexual orientation. We need to see and speak to each other not as members of constituencies but as individuals.

Second, the church has the responsibility to make another unceasing proclamation: to love one another and keep commending each and all to the mercy of God. This is not mere pious rhetoric. We must continuously and creatively make this proclamation which can cut through homophobia, heterophobia, xenophobia, racism, sexism — and so many other irrational fears and prejudices that cut us off from each other and ultimately from our very selves.

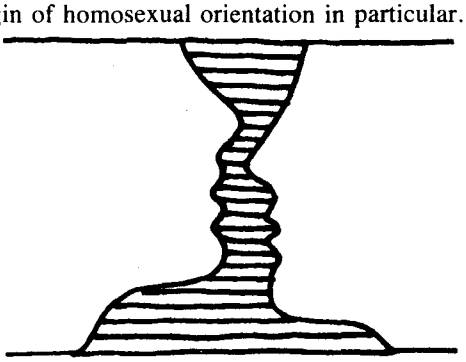
While the church must make these proclamations, it also must admit its own failures. Sometimes, the bias of our culture is reflected among some members of the church. At times, our attempts to teach our theology of sexuality have been "heard" — though not intended — as speaking of condemnation and rejection. The result has been alienation of many homosexuals from the church. Our teaching on sexuality stands. I believe in it and I shall continue to proclaim it. But while remaining faithful to our beliefs and values, we must also work aggressively to eliminate the sense of alienation experienced by homosexuals and to ensure that all of God's daughters and sons feel at home in his house.

2. Theology and spirituality of sexuality

You have raised many provocative questions about the church's teaching on human sexuality and how this relates to the life and spirituality of those who are homosexual.

My general response to your specific questions begins with an important point: Sexuality is only one aspect of human personhood, albeit a most significant one. Persons are more than their sexuality, although they never exist apart from their sexuality. Moreover, sexuality takes in more than its genital dimension. In this broader perspective, sexuality is a dimension of one's identity and an expression of the human call to intimacy. It is a gift from God which brings richness and fulfillment to our lives when used in accord with God's plan.

But sexuality is not a simple gift. Because it pertains to our personhood, it is as mysterious and complex as is personhood itself. As we proceed in our dialogue, we must be open to learning more than we now know about human sexuality. Despite the so-called "sexual revolution," there is no definite agreement about the meaning of sexuality in general and about the origin of homosexual orientation in particular.



As we listen to what human science and experience have to tell us on these matters, we do so as believers. As you mention, our Christian tradition speaks of human sexuality in the context of the values of love, fidelity, self-sacrifice, and generativity. No matter what his or her orientation may be, it is the responsibility of every person to respect these values and integrate them in his or her personhood and sexuality. It is the goal of all persons to establish loving, caring, intimate relationships that bring life both to the relationship and to others. I believe that, in doing this, each person will encounter the power and the presence of a similarly loving, caring, and life-giving God.

In saying this, I am suggesting that it is the responsibility of all human persons to develop a spirituality which takes full account of their personhood and their sexuality. The question is not whether one's sexualtiy should be integrated but how it should be expressed. The difficulty this presents for the homosexuals who wish to be faithful to the teaching of the church is clear enough. But the fact is that we have a long way to go as a community of faith in developing an appropriate spirituality in the case of homosexuals and heterosexuals. This is because for many Catholics sexuality has been seen as something negative or spiritually irrelevant and not as a divine gift, a gift along with other gifts to be integrated into one's spiritual life.

In this context the point of our disagreement is both narrowed and made clear. To say it simply, our Roman Catholic tradition holds that heterosexual marital intimacy is the only proper context for the genital expression of human love-making and life-making. The genital expression of a homosexual is precluded.

I realize that these can be heard as "hard" words and that, for many, they may appear unreasonable. To such persons the church's teaching is not persuasive. We must work to make it such. And our teaching will be persuasive in proportion to its capacity to help people achieve a unified and coherent sense of life and self in faith.

3. Civil rights legislation

Now we can turn to the question of the controversy over so-called gay rights legislation. Let me articulate some principles that guide my own approach to this question.

First, in this pluralistic society of ours, it is appropriate for the church and all other groups and individuals to express the values which they believe ought to be the foundation of public order and policy. The church does not have a mandate to draft civil laws, but it has the right to speak to the consciences of those who have this responsibility.

Second, I agree with you that the development of public policy and law involves a balancing act that seeks to incorporate and respect the rights of all citizens. In the case of gay rights legislation, I seek to balance two values: (1) the fact that no person should be discriminated against because of his or her sexual orientation; and (2) the normativeness of heterosexual marital intimacy as the proper context for intimate genital encounters.

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I am speaking here of course about "public morality" — those areas of conduct about which the state can properly legislate. As a teacher of morality and a citizen, I want to protect the rights of all citizens, but I cannot support public protection or sanctioning of sexual activity or a way of life which compromises the normativeness of heterosexual marital intimacy.

In taking this nuanced position, I know that I have angered some in the homosexual community who would argue, much as you do, that to protect orientation but not activity is unacceptable because it partitions the human person. I also have angered others who feel that it is wrong to grant *any* rights to homosexuals. Moreover, I have learned how difficult it is in our legal system for legislators who agree with my position to draft appropriate legislation.

As the pastor of the Catholic church in Chicago, as one who seeks to bring peace and unity to the church and our metropolitan area, I have been troubled by the discord surrounding a proposed gay rights ordinance. I am willing to assist efforts to resolve this conflict in any appropriate way. In the meantime, I feel it is my responsibility to affirm what I believe to be the truth while reaching out to all with God's love, compassion, and understanding.

As I said at the beginning, this letter does not respond to all the issues you have raised. Rather, it is an appreciative acceptance of your invitation to dialogue. For this purpose, we must find a proper forum. To such discussions each must bring faith and a generous amount of trust in the other's good will. If we begin and end this way, we will surely end in a good place, the place God wants for us.

Assuring you of my prayers and with best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,
JOSEPH CARDINAL BERNARDIN
Archbishop of Chicago

THE CHURCH & THE WORKS OF JUSTICE

Haiti: the malnourished revolution

KAREN SUE SMITH

STANDING outside the Port-au-Prince airport in eighty-five degree heat, I observed few signs of the poverty I had come to Haiti to see. Instead I watched a pleasant commotion: Teenage boys hawking leather purses, rum, wood carvings, T-shirts with "Haitian Liberation" inscribed across the chest. Crowds of well dressed Haitians hovered around the one door where newly arrived passengers would step out to be picked up by friends or family. Anyone carrying baggage was mobbed by men and boys soliciting a job as red cap. "Tap-taps" — pick-up trucks with elaborately painted cabins over the truck beds — packed in dozens of passengers for a trip to town. Many of the Daihatsu vans I saw were brand new.

People in Haiti, not just at the airport but throughout the country, appear to be in perpetual motion. Vendors line the roads selling cigarettes and packages of peanut butter crackers. It looks as though the contents of a thousand vending machines have been parceled out here. Hundreds of people are walking to and from the market, some laden with baskets of produce or bundles of wooden poles; men squat to make bricks or to whittle artifacts for tourists; men and women sit on porches and work at sewing machines. Life seems to be outdoors, market-centered, and bustling.

I noticed that the Hertz Rent-A-Car building, advertised on a full-size billboard at the airport, has never been completed. It stands, only one incomplete building among hundreds in the capital, as a monument to the national work stoppage. Why? Perhaps the revolution? Perhaps a withdrawal of financing until stability is restored? I could only guess. Meanwhile, squatters have occupied the structure, their straw-mat partitions and little bundles of belongings subdivide each floor.

As our van drove down the road toward the heart of the city, however, I was startled to see another side of Haiti. A number of people, alone or in twos, sat under skimpy shade trees beside the road. Alongside them were scattered animals — horses, cows, goats — so scrawny the flesh hung on their protruding frames. These animals were neither hitched nor fenced. Perhaps their lethargy made it unnecessary.

"Here we are entering the slum," shouted Father Lawrence Bohnen, the seventy-three-year-old Salesian priest who was our day's guide. I had come to Haiti, along with other journalists, at the invitation of Ferdinand Mahfood, founder of the Christian relief organization Food for the Poor. Our objective was to visit briefly the cities of Port-au-Prince and Gonaïves in order to observe first-hand specific programs in education, health care, and communications, staffed by Catholic religious and/or directly sponsored by the Catholic church. I had departed from my home in Brooklyn, New York to learn that "Brooklyn" was the name given to the slum through which Father Bohnen was leading us. This Brooklyn may be the worst slum in the Western Hemisphere. That is, unless the

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worst is Boston, the slum next door, separated from Brooklyn by one wide market street. A whole series of slums lie isolated north of Port-au-Prince between the city's railroad and the water's edge.

Sixty thousand people live in Brooklyn and Boston in corrugated tin teepees or in huts made of scrap wood and metal. These huts are so densely cramped together that the walkways are a mere three feet wide, and eighteen inches or more of that width is an open trench through which runs human sewage. As I walked along with several children holding onto either hand, I watched their bare feet wade through these trenches at times. One young mother walked beside me repeating softly, while extending her hand, " *'S'il vous plaît?*" Dogs lay on the narrow paths without stirring even as fifty people approached; we had to step over them. A cat chewed on the slippery entrails of some rodent which lay on the threshold of a family's front door. To the side, swarms of flies circled around a stagnant pool of water beside which naked children played. I caught glimpses of naked adults lying on the bare ground inside several of these shacks. In the background a radio— the only one I heard — blared the voice of Maureen McGovern singing, "There's got to be a morning after...."

Father Bohnen says that slum residents are rural people who come down from the mountains. They are baptized and are extremely religious-minded. "The Good Lord is Good," is one of their favorite sayings and demonstrates that they do not blame God for their condition. Bohnen winks and says, "Of course, 99 percent of Haitians are Catholics, but 100 percent are Voodoo."

Thirteen thousand children from Brooklyn and Boston attend Bohnen's 140 mini-schools there. In addition to receiving a hot meal each day, they receive a rudimentary education. The best students may go on to one of the four central schools run by Bohnen. Only a handful will progress as far as the Salesian technical school.

"Education takes centuries," Bohnen says. The Dutch priest has worked in the slums of Port-au-Prince for thirty-two years. His school teachers are themselves slum dwellers who have been trained; they continue to spend two hours a week in special classes. "We instruct them on how to teach human rights and family planning," Bohnen says. " That's the most important element in my program: educating the educators."

I heard a story that illustrates Father Bohnen's reputation among the local Haitians. Last February, in an effort to preserve an office that had been used by the Tontons Macoute — Duvalier's ruthless private police — someone spray-painted Bohnen's name across the office building. Then, when the anti-Duvalier rioters saw Bohnen's name, they spared the property. The building has now been turned into a school.

Three community health centers serve the slums of Brooklyn and Boston; they are major preventative facilities. A staff of doctors, nurses, and aides manages to see all 60,000 registered residents once every three months and to keep meticulously records of all vaccinations and services.

Dr. Reginald Boulos, a Harvard-trained public health administrator and former Minister of Health in Haiti, directs these health facilities, and others, along with his son, also a physician. Boulos, a stocky, balding man with a dignified carriage, said that 50 percent of Haitians face moderate malnutrition, 37 percent severe. When asked what moderate malnutrition is, Boulos said, "They are not going to die from it soon."

A separate program for third-degree malnutrition serves 120 children daily. These children, mostly infants, are fed three meals a day for several months. Their mothers, who must accompany them, are instructed on general health care and receive training in a marketable skill: embroidery, sewing, art. Twelve women have formed a successful ice cream-making cooperative after receiving two months of free supplies and training. The enterprise has become independent now and is expanding. A similarly-run peanut butter co-op is being planned.

At St. Catherine Laboure Hospital, which serves the slums, maternal care and pediatrics take priority. Expectant mothers are given vitamins and vaccinations to reduce the chances of bearing a low-birth-weight child. The maternity ward averages some 200 deliveries each month with a very low Caesarean rate of .5 percent, appreciably lower than U.S. statistics.

A Belgian sister told us that in the public health center where she works, the mortality rate has dropped from 200 per 1000 to 50 per 1000 in the last decade.

For such services, doctors earn $300 a month, $400 for those willing to serve the slums. Yet this wage must be compared to what other professional Haitians earn; for example, a teacher in a Catholic school earns $15 - $20 a month.

THE ROLE played by the Catholic church of Haiti in the overthrow last February 7 of President-for-life Jean-Claude Duvalier, has received less public attention than that of the church in the Philippines. One reason is that Haiti's prospects for self-government are so dim by comparison that the world is simply not poised for any imminent breakthrough. Of Haiti's six million people over 80 percent are illiterate; over 80 percent are unemployed or under-employed; and the majority live in the countryside where opportunities for job creation through new industry or investment are diminished, and where educational advancement and access to basic health care are remote.

After ten months in power, the National Governing Council (CNG) — the provisional government headed by Lieut. Gen. Henri Namphy — has managed to stave off total anarchy. But the government is not trusted. Full civil liberties have not been restored, though civil freedoms have been vastly increased, including that of a relatively free press. There have also been outbreaks of police violence reminiscent of the recent dictatorial past. Post-Duvalier hopes for organized labor activities, for example, have been dashed with the government's response to the November bus/taxi-driver strike: at least two demonstrators were killed, their bodies left unattended for a full twenty-four hours in what was interpreted as a government warning to labor activists and public protests.

The current public mood is less than enthusiastic about

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government. Fewer than 20 percent of Haiti's eligible voters bothered to vote October 19 in the first democratic national election held in thirty years, to choose members for a team to draft a new constitution. Most nettlesome is the Namphy government's reticence to purge its ranks of former Duvalier henchmen and associates, an understandable reluctance considering that Namphy himself was chief-of-staff of the army under Jean-Claude Duvalier and was his hand-picked successor; Interior Minister Col. William Regala and Jacques Françoise, two of the three current members of the CNG, were also closely linked to "Baby Doc." The government's decision last month to replace many of the diplomatic corps with men not tied to the old dictatorship, while a step in the right direction, is superficial in that it misses the heart of the objection to "Duvalierism without Duvalier." Still, with presidential elections promised by the end of 1987, no contender has yet emerged from the many opposition parties who seems able to draw a substantial degree of public support.

Economically, the country's future appears bleak, at least in the short-term. Of some 220 American businesses, attracted to Haiti by its cheap labor force ($3 a day minimum wage) and tax breaks for new industry, about one-quarter closed down, pulled out, or reduced production this year. Such actions affect many of the 60,000 Haitians these U.S.-owned companies employed in 1985. Haitian-owned businesses are stagnant. Even contracts for 19,000 cane-cutters, who work in near slave conditions for six months each year in the Dominican Republic, were canceled in 1986 because of low world sugar prices. Tourism remains crippled not only because of the specter of political upheaval, but by the association of AIDS with Haitians living in the United States, a connection that triggered an immediate and sustained decline in the number of American tourists to Haiti.

Haiti falls victim to the cruel irony that stable government is a criterion for foreign investment, even if that stability is created by the strong arm of a political tyrant. Revolution proposes to benefit the entire society, including foreign business ventures, by establishing a better, more democratic, more stable government. Yet the revolutionary process tends to create a degree of instability which can undermine the revolution itself, if the economy collapses consequently and the government is overcome by chaos.

Fortunately, foreign aid will continue to flow into Haiti. According to the Washington Office on Haiti, $25.5 million in U.S. aid (out of some $108 million allotted for 1986) has been designated. In addition, $480,000 worth of rifles, rubber bullets, tear gas, gas masks, and two-way radios has been provided to the Haitian military; Congress has approved $4 million in military assistance to Haiti this year. How this money and these supplies will be used is a matter deserving public scrutiny — here and in Haiti — not only because of the tenuousness of the Haitian political situation, but given the notoriously corrupt handling of past aid packages channeled through both Duvalier governments.

KAREN SUE SMITH *is an assistant editor of* Commonweal.

Between 1973 and 1981, nearly $500 million in foreign aid — largely in the form of loans — was supplied to Haiti, over 80 percent of which was offered by the U.S., the World Bank's International Development Association, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Yet these hundreds of millions of dollars in economic assistance, poured into a nation the size of Maryland, failed to reverse Haiti's plunge into poverty. Why? According to Dr. Josh DeWind and David Kinley, authors of *Aiding Migration: The Impact of International Development Assistance in Haiti* (Center for the Social Sciences, Columbia University, 1986), these funds were "in large part subverted by the Haitian government through a

MULTIPLYING LOAVES

FOOD FOR THE POOR IN HAITI

FERDINAND MAHFOOD is a slightly built, gracious-mannered man whose English is accented by British vowels open enough to reveal his upbringing in post-colonial Jamaica as a member of a wealthy Lebanese family in the import-export trade. Yet "Ferdy," as he is affectionately called by friends, also emits the piercing acuity of "a true believer" whose vocation and singular mission have imbued his life with an intensity that is dissipated or seldom evoked in most people.

As our group of Catholic journalists tramped through the slush of open sewage in the sun-baked slums of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the understandable need evidenced by a few of the journalists for comic relief in the face of such human misery simply didn't occur to Mahfood. He was busily attending to the swarm of children who latched onto him, as did a number of homeless men in a shelter we visited in the northern city of Gonaives, and as did several fragile elderly women — one of whom carries a photograph of herself with Mahfood — in a retirement home.

Mahfood unself-consciously falls into a long line of prophets who, as a group, have never been models of "low-key," "balanced," or "well-rounded" personalities. His dark eyes and impassioned speech hint at an internal fire, a fire he stokes daily by an early morning regimen: two hours of contemplative prayer before Mass and spiritual reading. When I met Mahfood last October, he was reading theologian Thierry Maertens and was taking quite personally Maertens's observations that Christians have not really used their imaginations to the full in approaching life's problems.

Of course, Mahfood readily explains that he did not ignite this fire himself. "The Lord has called me to this," he says of the conversion experience that caused him to recover from a nervous breakdown — interrupting his success as a business man in partnership with his brothers

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combination of bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption, which systematically diverted aid resources away from the genuinely needy."

Nevertheless, in the 1980s the annual aid disbursements to Haiti from these same sources doubled, exceeding $100 million. The tragedy is that such monies seldom accomplished their donors' intended purposes: to thwart land erosion, abate the agricultural crisis, curb food shortages, or subsidize job creation.

Furthermore, Haitian emigration to the U.S. — largely to Miami and New York City — has steadily increased, despite U.S. immigration policies which discourage giving political asylum to Haitians. Emigration shows no signs of slowing down. While emigration has generally improved the lives of both those who have left Haiti (i.e., who have arrived in the U.S. safely) and the families they support by sending U.S.-earned money back home (perhaps as much as $100 million a year), emigration robs Haiti of a precious national resource: its own best educated, most skilled, highly motivated citizens.

During the present period in which the Haitian people's expectations and aspirations for their own future have reached a pitch not matched by the performance of either government or the private sector, the role of the Catholic church — its message and ministries — deserves a close examination.

— and to initiate in 1982 a non-profit, charitable trust, Food for the Poor (FFP).

Food for the Poor's stated purpose is "to help alleviate hunger, misery, sickness, poverty, and ignorance in Jamaica, Haiti, and other third-world countries. It also seeks to evangelize both the needy and the affluent." As Mahfood sees it: "We are commanded to continue the daily multiplication of loaves and fishes on a global, planetary scale."

What keeps Food for the Poor from being merely one more Christian relief organization in Haiti?

● First, Food for the Poor is able to operate outside the USAID-mandated geographic demarcations that proscribe private voluntary organizations which distribute USAID food, such as Catholic Relief Services, CARE, World Vision, and the Seventh Day Adventists. Food for the Poor is under no such restriction because its monies for relief are not tied to USAID. FFP can deliver truckloads of food, building materials, or medical supplies to areas where other agencies are not permitted to go, or can contribute to Catholic schools in regions serviced by CARE, for example, which does not contribute to Catholic schools.

● Second, Food for the Poor asks priests, nuns, and other missionaries exactly what they need, and attempts to fill these precise requests. One sister, for example, asked Mahfood for twelve ox-drawn plows from Holland. She got them. This is why the $7 million of goods FFP has sent to Haiti since 1982 has included unexpected items — along with the predictable shipments of food, building materials, schools supplies, and medicines — such as a honey-extracting machine, a Land Rover for the L'Arche community, church furniture, and vestments. "Whatever priests and nuns say they need," Mahfood says, explaining that even the bishops in Haiti have no typewriters, no secretaries. "I am an evangelist not a social worker," says Mahfood, who calls duty-free shipments from FFP "pre-evangelization" that "empowers priests."

● Third, Food for the Poor is able to pass on the bulk of donations (95¢ on the dollar) directly to the poor because of low overhead costs and efficient management. The organization's primary fund raiser, Mahfood, has an arrangement worked out through his brothers' largess, to draw his company salary to support his own family, while devoting himself full-time to FFP. Mrs. Raymond Pun, the young Haitian director of the local program, brings impressive credentials and experience to the effort.

● Fourth, Food for the Poor is small enough to be highly flexible and innovative. For example, through its "Share the Harvest" program, FFP purchased two million pounds of beans from a Nebraska food exporting organization, providing in one maneuver a market for suffering American farmers and a staple food product for impoverished Haitians. When the Canadian government donated a fully-equipped, two-hundred-bed hospital to FFP, the shipping expertise of the Mahfood brothers allowed the facility to be shipped expeditiously, with FFP paying only the shipping costs.

Throughout our trip we heard sisters, priests, doctors, and a bishop tell which tangible items would assist them in their work: money for transmitters for Radio Soleil, money for salaries of Catholic school teachers and catechists, money for flour to make bread, boxes of vegetable seeds for planting gardens, seedlings for tree farms, etc. Food for the Poor would like to supply these needs.

"Hunger persists," Mahfood says, "because we choose not to end it; we look the other way...We need to re-evaluate the way we see Eucharist. Might we not be offering Eucharist to others in Christian charity?"

(Donations may be sent to: Food for the Poor; 1301 W. Copans Rd.; Pompano Beach, FL 33064). K.S.

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Nearly five million Haitians are Catholics, and the church, led by seven bishops and a largely indigenous clergy and religious, is unsurpassed in Haiti for its institutional organization and singular ability to mobilize the population. This, of course, did not escape notice of the Duvalier regimes and led, in recent years, to a campaign against the church in which lay leaders and several priests were abducted, killed, beaten, interrogated without cause, or expelled.

In December 1980, the Haitian Conference of Religious (CRH) published a document asking authorities to reconsider "cases of deportation and imprisonment which had taken place during recent police raids." The document was read over Radio Soleil — the station operated by the episcopal conference of Haiti. That same month, the archbishop of Port-au-Prince issued a similar appeal. The bishops' conference, however, issued a less specific pastoral message. Things were to change in the following years.

Between December 1980 and March 1983, when Pope John Paul II visited Haiti, two crucial events occurred: the Eucharistic and Marian Congress was held, culminating in the papal visit, and a Symposium of lay leaders, clergy, religious, and all seven bishops issued a message to the Haitian people in Creole. In this message the bishops admitted their sin of division, fear, lack of solidarity, the gap between their words and actions, and they initiated a drive toward unity through a system of basic Christian communities.

Within a month after this public statement of repentance, Father Gerard Duclerville, director of "Catholic Volunteers," was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured. After a flood of protests, he was finally turned over to the archbishop, but had to spend months in the hospital recuperating. This incident bolstered the bishops' resolve still further.

Since February 7, 1986, under the Namphy provisional government, the Bishops' Conference of Haiti has issued seven pastoral letters. Initially, the bishops admonished their people against revenge and wanton violence. Gradually they set out a list of priorities for the reconstruction of Haitian society: (1) a literacy program to enable citizen-participation in government; (2) agrarian reform (Haiti still has no legal system of land entitlements); (3) employment; and (4) a political will to implement such changes. The bishops have also set out guidelines to peaceful protesters and to police who must patrol demonstrations. In March, the bishops launched a five-year literacy campaign — alphabetization — to wipe out illiteracy in Haiti. Some funding has been provided by the U.S. bishops' conference in a tandem effort.

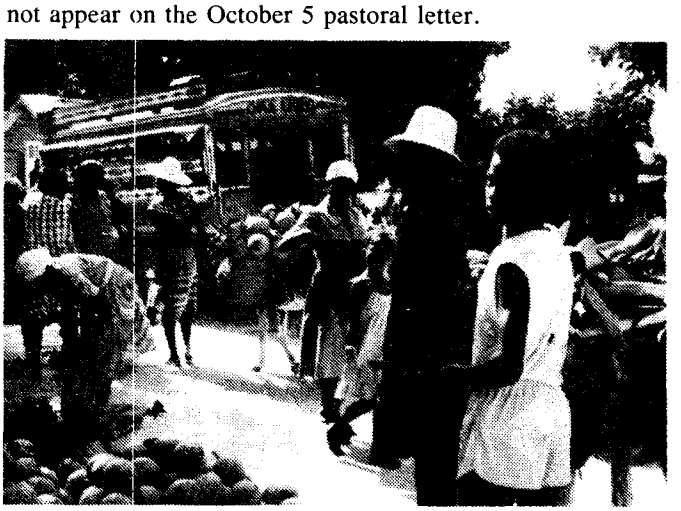
The day before I arrived in Haiti the bishops issued their seventh letter, which implicitly charges the Namphy government with insensitivity to social, economic, and political crises which have become "more and more aggravated." The tone of the letter is forceful and pointed:

> How many people have been punished for having embezzled funds from the public treasury? ...What has happened to the administrator of the literacy program, Charlot Jacquelin? Has he been kidnapped or arrested?
>
> It has been said that the future of Haiti depends upon the church, the one mediating structure capable of laying the prerequisite foundation for self-government. If, after Duvalier, life has gotten worse for most Haitians, the church provides a message of hope: something has to change here. Since 1983 this message has been consistently held up by the Haitian bishops. It was offered in a pivotal homily delivered in Port-au-Prince in 1983 by Pope John Paul II:
>
> It is necessary for the "poor" of all kinds to begin to hope again...There is really a profound need of justice, of a better distribution of goods, of a more equitable organization of society. . . . There should be the possibility to eat one's full...to have housing, schooling, victory over illiteracy, honest and dignified work, social security, respect for family responsibilities . . . everything which ensures that men and women, children and the aged can live truly human lives.

THE DAY after our visit to the slums of Brooklyn and Boston, we drove five hours up the coastal road from Port-au-Prince to Gonaïves — where the revolution actually began — to speak with Bishop Emmanuel Constant. Constant is a large, friendly man who appeared before us wearing a long white cassock with red buttons down the front, and, after shaking everyone's hand, squeezed his over-six-foot frame into one of the student-sized desks we were all embedded in. He spoke in Creole which was translated for us by an interpreter.

Bishop Constant told us that the pastoral letter just issued was not merely political, but addressed the entire Haitian community. The bishops, he said, had tried to analyze the current realities of life and to show exactly what the problems are. At the same time, they had to reiterate the priorities stated in past letters. "Nobody has taken care of these priorities yet," he said. "If they had, tensions would be relieved."

I asked whether the Haitian bishops remain united, in light of reports in the U.S. media of efforts to have Archbishop Ligondé of Port-au-Prince removed for his close Duvalier associations and loyalties. Constant said, "At the entire episcopal level the bishops are united. All the bishops sign the documents." Archbishop Ligondé, however, was in Rome during October, which is at least one reason why his name does not appear on the October 5 pastoral letter.



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In a nation of illiterate citizens, radio is the chief means of public communication. Operating on an annual budget of $222,000, the Catholic station, Radio Soleil, broadcasts seven days a week from 5 A.M. to 11 P.M. Its transmitters reach nearly 65 percent of the Haitian population. Father Hugo Trieste, a Belgian Missionhurst priest, is the director of Radio Soleil. In July 1985 Radio Soleil aired discussions of the referendum being presented before the voters: the referendum declared Jean-Claude Duvalier President-for-Life, with powers to appoint the prime minister and to appoint his own successor. It also called for the legal existence of various political parties, but undermined this goal with a list of exceptions. Views were broadcast during the course of the discussion which made it plain that the referendum was a hoax, but the station did not urge, as some reports have suggested, that people boycott the election.

Nevertheless, Trieste was arrested and detained briefly. The next day he received notice to leave the country. Two other priests were expelled along with him, and one elderly priest was brutally beaten to death. Trieste returned to Haiti in March 1986.

Trieste said the station's objective is "evangelization, education, and information." Naturally, Radio Soleil broadcasts all the bishops' pastoral messages; daily Mass in Creole and French; and programs on literacy, health, cooperatives, and conscientization. "We insist on having direct or indirect participation from the grassroots," Trieste said. "Before February 7, all the complaints people had, they came here and voiced them. But there are more complaints now."

"I'm afraid of huge organizations," Trieste said, shaking his head over the annual budget for the station he administers. "I ask: Is this money really used to profit the poor? Do our programs really aim at bringing something about at the lowest levels?"

When Father Trieste was asked what the U.S. church can do in face of all the complex problems and enormous needs of the Haitian people, he paused before answering: "The first thing the church should do, I think, is to become aware of what is going on in the world. Then start changing their lifestyles accordingly." It was a personal challenge.

When I think of Haiti, I recall the powerful images of human suffering I witnessed. More potent still, however, is the faith of the people we met, faith that grounds their deep commitment to the poor. Rather than let themselves be disillusioned by the deteriorating conditions — even in the wake of the Duvalier ouster — in a country where most had worked for at least a decade and where some had spent their entire lives, each seemed enthusiastic, vivacious, sustained by her or his vocation and daily service. I found this faith in the wry one-liners of Father Bohnen and in the revolutionary quips of Father Yvan Pollefeyt (who had been expelled along with Father Trieste). "They say we do politics, but when you talk about the Gospel, it is politics," Pollefyt said. "Jesus in heaven isn't dangerous. Jesus on earth is dangerous." I found this faith in the gentle warmth of Bishop Constant. I found it in the ebullient personality of Sister Marie Emmanuel, a native of Port-au-Prince, a doctor, and a true Daughter of Wisdom.

Sister Marie dances through the tidy but bare wards of the home for the elderly where she and two other sisters live and work. She waltzes to one bed after another singing and touching the people. She takes a feeble blind man's face in both her hands and strokes him. "*Bonjour, mon cher*," she says to him. And to us she makes a pun in English, "His name is *L'homme*, that means man. He's not a girl, he's a man." The dozen, silent, seemingly-dazed men — who cannot understand English — break into peals of laughter at her English joke. They know what matters: Sister Marie is present for them, joking with them. Her healing spirit was palpable in every room she entered. This is what teaching human dignity means.

Screen

BEYOND HEROICS

'THE MOSQUITO COAST'

THE MOSQUITO COAST is gravely flawed and gravely magnificent, an irritating, provocative adventure satire based on Paul Theroux's novel on the hippie as a modern Dr. Frankenstein. To be more precise, the central character (played by Harrison Ford) is not exactly a hippie but one of those members of the "sixties generation" who is *in* America, but not *of* it. An expert in popular mechanics and alternative energy sources, Ford is sickened by our country's waste and frightened by the danger of nuclear war. The country, he says in the first scene in a dry-goods store, is going to the dogs, and he never tires of saying it thereafter. Ford's achievement, guided by Peter Weir who also directed him in *Witness*, is to catch our sympathy for the character despite arousing annoyance, and even at times disgust.

Aside from Ford's acting, Weir's narrative method also provides a strong means of maintaining sympathy: we see Ford through the eyes of his oldest teenage son (played by the astonishingly named actor River Phoenix). The son reveres his father as an inventor and free spirit, claiming proudly in an opening, voice-over narration, "My father dropped out of Harvard, he said, 'to get an education.' " Many such modern Thoreaus (the original even punned, "You learn all the branches of learning at Harvard, and none of the roots") existed and exist, having abandoned careerism to settle in Vermont, make cabinets, and read the *Whole Earth Catalog*. Ford's figure goes whole hog, so to speak, and uproots his wife (Helen Mirren) and his family to trek to tropical South America to be free. Once there, the coast isn't good enough; they've got to keep going "upstream." Soon one wonders how long Ford's son will love him, how long this Swiss Family Robinson will survive its Faustian Robinson Crusoe.

The satire is subtle and suspenseful, at least for the first half of the film. Despite planting premonitions of disaster, Weir

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keeps postponing it, granting Ford a measure of success as a genuine visionary. Ford buys a "town" (in fact a downtrodden set of hovels as far "upstream" as he can get), and to the astonishment of family and natives, transforms it into a paradise of low-tech farming and carpentry. He even realizes his deepest fantasy: to build a gigantic ice machine which needs no energy and only ammonia as raw fuel. Weir and Ford's achievement is to retain enough plausibility for these events to delineate the narrow border between genius and madness.

The inevitable disasters in the film's second half are less interesting than Ford's language and family conflicts. He is a suave, ideological master of slogans and half-truths: even after one grisly apocalypse, he has the hubris to declare, "I'm happy because now we're really free." The screenplay, written by Paul Schrader, is filled with perfect illustrations of those worst of evils—evils rationalized with the aid of ideology. Not enough sixties gurus have been so examined, so dissected, for the evil spirits lurking inside their spirited critique of social evil. At its best, *The Mosquito Coast* has the Dostoyevskian power to remind us how many emotional dictators feast on dissent.

The most brilliant element in *The Mosquito Coast* involves Ford's abusive derision of his sons when they doubt his wisdom. To him, they are namby-pamby to question "upstream" destiny. On one grueling trek, he asks them sarcastically if they want popsicles or rooms at the Holiday Inn, then tells them they'd better "act like men." *Mosquito Coast* is thus a double-edged satire with a single center: the most anti-American character is the most American of all.

Ford's secret sharer is an obnoxious evangelical missionary (André Gregory). On the surface, they are enemies, with Ford hating Gregory's use of the Gospel as an opiate for the masses. Deep down, Weir and Schrader suggest, they are different expressions of the same conquistadorial temper, tyrannizing over natives and family alike. In a small part, Gregory's daughter (Martha Plimpton) is allowed some rather lewd, but realistically idiosyncratic lines to express comically her rebellion.

The treatment of Ford's family, however, involves one awful defect. Helen Mirren, one of the finest actresses in England, never challenges her husband. Indeed, while Ford is often referred to as "Father," he calls her "Mother," which is less a statement of equality than an alias for "little woman." It is hard to believe that she would be so passive and dependent, especially considering her character's probable familiarity with sixties feminism. Schrader and Weir try to finesse the issue by showing her happily abandoning unwashed dishes on leaving America, but the scene is inadequate to explain how much she tolerates in the jungle.

The film is better than its defects. Weir had a hard time getting it made; in Hollywood, producers wanted a happy ending. He refused, then found Saul Zaentz, who financed *Amadeus*. In Ford, he found an actor willing to extend himself beyond the conventional heroic mode that brought him stardom. Using Theroux, they made a movie that combines adventure and intelligence. You could do a lot worse, and recent films have rarely done better. TOM O'BRIEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH FILM DIRECTOR ALAIN CAVALIER

Success in small things

TOM O'BRIEN

ALAIN CAVALIER is the French director whose recently released film, Therese *– a study of the Carmelite nun, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux – won a special jury prize at the 1986 Cannes film festival.*

O'BRIEN: Why did you choose a neutral green background for the film?

CAVALIER: To concentrate the view, the eye of the spectator on something very precise. To see a face well, all you should see is *just* the face. This also involves a style which is a little bit *pauvre* — poor — like the Carmelites are poor. And like the Carmelites, I attempt to do a lot with very little. My film tries to record the importance of every single object in the Carmelite convents. One thing I wanted to film — but couldn't because of time limits — was the Carmelites receiving a letter; they unglue the envelopes, and write the answer on the same envelope so that they don't waste it.

Of course, use of the simple green background also allowed the film to be inexpensive, to remain "poor" on that level. But we also realized that this system of shooting took on a symbolic meaning. With the sets, we constructed a "free space" with no walls, no windows, no ceilings. This fits women who close themselves up only to be able to better open themselves up to the world.

O'BRIEN: The color red appears only a few times in the film. Did you try to isolate those few times, for dramatic purposes?

CAVALIER: We realized that the only *important* red in the film was blood, and once I became conscious of that, each

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time we saw any other red, we had a tendency to take it out. There are a few other reds at the beginning; a priest, a cardinal . . . a lobster . . .

O'BRIEN: But is this to isolate the blood, to make it stand out?

CAVALIER: Yes. The word blood comes up a great deal in the film. For example, the Gospel is read at one point, where John tells the anecdote of the woman who was losing blood and touches the hem of Jesus. This leads into one of the most beautiful phrases in the film, "Whoever touches me steals my strength."

O'BRIEN: There is no music in the film, and very little sound. Why?

CAVALIER: Silence is of utmost importance in the convent. It's within silence that one hears things well. The absence of music, like the absence of sets, allows one really to listen to the music of words and the music of objects. Every object, even a textile and vestment, has its own music.

O'BRIEN: Why did you choose actress Catherine Mouchet to play Thérèse?

CAVALIER: I looked for the face of a woman that would not transmit a single molecule of sexual implication. Such a face is very hard to find. I found only one.

O'BRIEN: But doesn't she transmit radiant good nature?

CAVALIER: Absolutely. Thérèse loves life; she transmits life. But outside of the system of reproduction.

O'BRIEN: Did you find the humor of *Thérèse* in her famous diary?

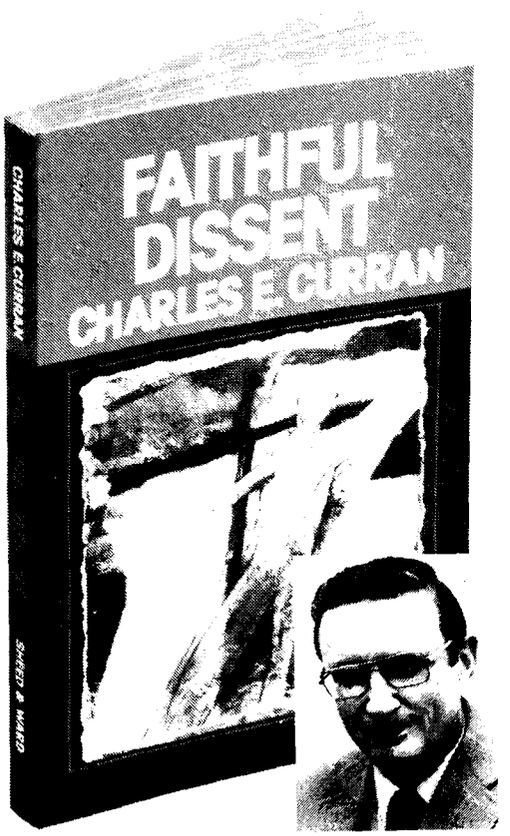
CAVALIER: Her humor is in the little book, but we had to read between the lines because this book was written on order from her Mother Superior. She felt that maybe Thérèse was a little bit too exalted, and she gave the order like you tell people [Cavalier laughed here] who have too much energy to go and do some exercise, just to get it out of them. Thérèse was writing her little diary every day, in the very small amount of time for freedom that a Carmelite has, but the Mother Superior had already forgotten about it.

Thérèse was both comical and mystical. To be a genuinely mystical person — it's like physical training — there are moments when you just need to laugh.

O'BRIEN: But why did you want to provide humor?

CAVALIER: I spoke with Carmelites in the convent, and I could never say three words before they would burst out laughing. The fact that they are closed up means they have a certain freshness, and almost childlikeness. I also met with many Carmelite nuns who had left the order for reasons of health or nonadaptation. Everyone I met was always very gay. It's almost indispensable to mystical love to have a sense of gaiety and joy. There are such passages in the mystical night, such short intense moments of

If you love the Church, you must read . . .



The "Curran Affair" has called attention to the crisis of authority *vs.* authoritarianism in the Catholic Church. In *Faithful Dissent*, Father Curran provides complete documentation of his controversy with the Vatican over the legitimacy of theological and practical dissent in the Catholic Church. He includes all letters and statements from Rome as well as an extended reflection on the role of the moral theologian in the Church. If you love the Church, you must read *Faithful Dissent*, the key statement by this controversy's principal figure.

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light, that there's a "hygiene" of good humor that's indispensable to keep going.

O'BRIEN: Why is Thérèse never embarrassed by some sexual suggestions made by the other nuns in the story, especially the one named Lucy?

CAVALIER: Thérèse understands her very well. That's why she says, "I love her, but I can't tell her." This is because Lucy's love for Thérèse is sexual, indeed homosexual. Thérèse loves her, but in her universal, unconditional way.

O'BRIEN: Was the relationship to Lucy discussed in the diary?

CAVALIER: What was published was her diary as well as the letters of her family. Do you recall the letter from her sister Celine that's read in the film? I didn't change a word of it. When Celine came into the convent she still had a strong sexuality. This disappeared after two or three years in Carmel, as it usually does. In the story, I displaced such feelings onto Lucy. It was stronger than if it had been a love of sister for sister.

O'BRIEN: Why underline the suffering of their father?

CAVALIER: We're dealing with a man whose four daughters left for the convent. Did they go and marry an imaginary man because they didn't want to admit they loved their father? There's no trace of that in the film, although I thought about it. Or maybe this man didn't love them and they escaped him. Or maybe they didn't realize that they were killing him, and when he had a stroke, maybe it's at that time that Thérèse became tubercular. For her the "father" may not just be the father but maybe also God. It's a question that I didn't want to approach in any clear way, so that every one of us in our fundamental experience can give his or her own pesonal answer.

O'BRIEN: Isn't the whole movie a question of "maybe," even in interpreting sanctity?

CAVALIER: The saintliness of Thérèse causes confusion for people. Thérèse never did any miracles. She contented herself with trying to be a perfect Carmelite, just like thousands of Carmelites since the beginning of the order. But she wrote a little diary which has touched millions of people. We made her a saint, though she already was, just as many Carmelites are, or many people in life really are. To canonize her, we found the reason that she herself found, that saintliness is in an accumulation of successful small things.

O'BRIEN: Your film is open to different interpretations of sanctity?

CAVALIER: Personally, I have a grand passion for Flaubert, and he has an enormous place in my life. He's at one and the same time my father, and an expression of the highest genius, and he can answer many small problems that I have during the day. I understand very well how certain women could get together around a genius — Jesus was a genius — and consider him practically alive, especially since Jesus spent all of his life saying, I am life.

O'BRIEN: At a preview in Ireland, a member of a religious order claimed this film was insulting, while another priest defended it. How do you respond to the charge that the film insults religion?

CAVALIER: I don't understand it. A film that only speaks of love, and is only about love — and not sexual love — how can it cause so many protests? I'm flabbergasted.

O'BRIEN: But Lucy is sometimes perverse. She tastes Thérèse's bloody saliva in the hospital. She practices extreme mortification of the flesh. Some people will say, "Nuns do not do this." This is "Freudian."

CAVALIER: In the nineteenth century, every Friday, the Carmelite nuns would flagellate themselves, all twenty-four together. Can you imagine if I had filmed that? People don't want to know these things and they refuse the truth about them. But I didn't film that. On top of that, when Thérèse sees the mortification of Lucy, Thérèse says, "Do you think that will please Him?" She's against it. Maybe these protesters reproach me because I did not make a work of propaganda. Maybe it's this that shocks them.

I come from a very Catholic background. Catholics regard Thérèse as their private property. Maybe this particular Thérèse is someone they don't like. But then there are so many ways of being Catholic now. Some Catholics see this film and are transported by it.

When we were shooting this film, we thought it would have a very small audience. We never thought it would cause any controversy.

O'BRIEN: Were you aiming for a complicated response?

CAVALIER: I was much more innocent than that. I went to the library of the Carmel at Lisieux. One day the Mother Superior said, "I'm going to do something for you which I have never done even for the historians of our order. I am going to have you visit the Carmel." She had no idea what I wanted to do, but she let me see everything — the infirmary where Thérèse died, where she ate, her cell. I was very moved. I told myself I would never reconstruct the Carmel I had seen. The stucco would never get me the truth I saw with my own eyes. In many ways, when I was making the film, I was like the Mother Superior; I had no premeditations. I didn't see the bad in anything.

O'BRIEN: What do you see as the center of the story in *Therese*?

CAVALIER: She says one hundred times in her little book that she has almost a coal of love, a fire of love, inside her, and she feels that she needs to give of this warmth, first to her husband, who then distributes it to the others. *Voilá*. And this is the only thing she ever thought of during her whole life.

give commonweal for Christmas

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Books: BETWEEN HEAVEN & EARTH

HOPE IN HARD TIMES
AMERICA'S PEACE MOVEMENT AND THE REAGAN ERA

Paul Rogat Loeb
Lexington Books, $10.95, 303 pp.

Peggy Rosenthal

AMONG recent books stimulated by the nuclear arms race, which seem to be proliferating almost as fast as the weapons themselves, *Hope in Hard Times* offers something refreshingly new, a detailed portrait of the current nuclear disarmament movement. Paul Loeb traveled around the country for four years interviewing participants, and he is deeply heartened by what he has seen and heard. Ordinary people from the proverbial all walks of life are being stirred, by the immensity of the nuclear threat, to take extraordinary personal steps to attend their first peace rally, to carry petitions door to door, to place their bodies in the way of weapons transport, to go to jail. Simply as a historic phenomenon, this popular protest movement deserves the attention Loeb gives it — whether or not one shares his conviction that "unless ordinary citizens act and continue to act on an unprecedented level, our species has little chance of emerging from its peril."

Loeb's attitude toward his subject is clear from the title of Part One, "Ordinary Heroes." Interested in what moves people to make radical choices, risking their jobs or reputations or more, he uses the "personal narrative" method to focus on representative conversion stories. So we hear a Minneapolis suburban housewife on her decision to risk arrest blockading a weapons plant; a Southern minister on his town's long preparation for its first peace march; a wealthy California businessman on his successful fundraising for the 1982 Freeze campaign; a Boston teacher and school children on their struggles to think about nuclear war and feel capable of preventing it; the international crew of sailors, blue-collar workers, and religious activists on their civil disobedience action against the Trident submarine near Seattle. Though the personal narrative method, with its predictable range of people and places, is by now something of a journalistic cliché, the method re deems itself here because it does seem the best vehicle for telling the story. In the drama of the spread of the antinuclear movement in the 1980s, personal narratives — in all their variety — are in fact where the action is.

The method is redeemed also just because Loeb is so good at it. He has a gift for capturing people's characteristic lines, for placing them in the context of a key event, and for linking each personal decision and particular event to other people's private decisions and other events around the country — all without slackening the pace of the central narrative. The result is that his writing actually dramatizes his main metaphor for the movement: that it is a chain of linked individual choices.

> *After Marty and Bob Coleman sold their $600,000 house so she could volunteer full time at Interfaith Center, they remained in their local Presbyterian congregation, and now teach to enthusiastic response a class on "Choosing Our Future: Rambo and the Nuclear Age." . . . Although Erica Bouza speaks two nights a week to Shriners, Kiwanis groups, and the Junior League, she decided she couldn't just stay in the antiseptic world of giving lectures, and was arrested a third time at Honeywell. This was a last-minute decision, and prompted Tony to look up, startled, and exclaim, "Son of a bitch! There goes my wife over the fence."*
>
> — Paul Rogat Loeb
> *Hope in Hard Times*

The larger links in the chain are the various "peace groups," local and national, with which anyone moving into antinuclear action eventually hooks up. The diversity of these groups, with their attachment to apparently every conceivable public identity that humans can have, is surely something new in American social history. Loeb manages to bring in a good many of them: Physicians for Social Responsibility, Educators for Social Responsibility, Business Executives for National Security, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Women Against Military Madness, the Peace Child Chorus, Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race, United Campuses Against Nuclear War. Loeb quotes a sales executive who hopes "we'll soon have Plumbers Against Nuclear War as well." And why not? I sometimes smile at what seems a spirit of comic inventiveness behind the prolific production of antinuclear groups, but I think the sheer excess is significant: everything that we identify with as civilized beings is threatened by nuclear war, and so all these identifications are legitimate reasons for protest.

Loeb provides us, in Part One, with an accurate and comprehensive picture of how these groups are interconnected through the individuals whose difficult private choices are the inner life of the antinuclear movement. Along the way, he also touches lightly on background points of theoretical interest that add depth to character or event. In Part Two, called "Obstacles and Visions," foreground and background change places. Theoretical concerns become Loeb's main focus, while the characters we've come to know slip back to serve as concrete reference points for the analysis.

This analysis is in the genre of movement self-reflection. Speaking now as a participant himself, Loeb asks, in effect, where should we go from here and how should we get there? So he discusses such questions as: whether legislative lobby-

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ing or civil disobedience has more impact; what religious and secular activists can learn from each other; how the movement can more effectively engage blue-collar workers and also blacks; what positive vision of the future the movement should project. These are important questions for movement activists to be considering, and Loeb presents them with the authority of someone long familiar with the literature of the intellectual left.

I worry, though, that in speaking from a position so firmly within the movement, Loeb makes it hard for outsiders, especially critics, to listen to him. For instance, he repeatedly uses the shorthand label "peace movement," apparently unaware that the movement's equation of nuclear disarmament and peace is strongly resented, even scorned, by those who believe that our nuclear deterrent has kept and is keeping peace. And when, in the course of his narrative, he occasionally comes across people who object to certain actions of the antinuclear movement, he dismisses their objection as "backlash" or "resistance." In his excitement at hearing so many voices around the country calling for a halt to the arms race, Leob seems to have shut out those who had something else to say. I think this is a shame, because it might restrict his readership to the already converted. But, to be fair, Loeb devoted a previous book *Nuclear Culture,* to listening sympathetically to the voices of people who work for the nuclear power industry. That book and Grace Mojtabai's *Blessed Assurance*

CORRECTION

The featured listing of "Human Family" books in our November 21st issue should have listed the price of *Ellis Island* as $21.95. The description of *The Yanov Torah* should have read as follows: A Torah, smuggled piece-by-piece into a Nazi work camp in Poland, is later rescued and brought to America by an émigré. Today the author, Rabbi Herman, carries it "from temple to temple, from place to place," as an example that, "although millions of Jews have been murdered, our Torah will live forever."

Religious booknotes

Women doing theology

Mary Gerhart

ONE of the recognized—even canonized—sources of theological reflection is biblical literature. Another major source, not so well recognized and perhaps less understood, is human experience.

The best known feminist theologians have been unanimous in their claim that women's experience of the past has been ignored, denigrated, or systematically misunderstood. Other authors have begun to publish reflections on women's experience — usually their own — in ways that make it more possible to do theology inclusive of women's experience.

All but one of the books reviewed here are special examples of the genre of testimonial—special because they have been written in the light of communal experience and reflect communal criticism. The personal style of the author is apparent in each case, and the book is informed by others as well as the author's personal experience.

Woman: Survivor in the Church, *by Joan Ohanneson, Winston, $6.95, paper, 204 pp.*

A writer and producer of audio-visual materials on the elderly and women in society and winner of the Gabriel Award in 1979 for a TV show on "Women's Gifts," Joan Ohanneson combines a narrative thread with apt comments and questions in *Woman: Survivor in the Church.* In a pair of essays—"Where Have Women Been?" and "Where Are Women Today?"—one woman is quoted as asking, "Why am I able to receive more equity in civil society, in the pagan marketplace, than in the church that speaks to me of justice and charity, honesty and accountability?" In another essay, "The Bishop as Healer: Churchmen Challenge the Status Quo," Ohanneson quotes several bishops who have spoken out on behalf of justice for women: Bishops Leo T. Maher, Carroll T. Dozier, William D. Borders, Charles A. Buswell, and Maurice Dingman. She also quotes at length the 1979 Pastoral Letter of seven Minnesota bishops, which ends with an apology, unprecedented as far as I know: "If we, as leaders of local churches, have ever closed ourselves to the Spirit's presence and power within women, we apologize to them and we seek the Spirit's forgiveness." The book is wide-ranging and heuristic, carrying within itself the changes it promotes.

In *Gender and God: Love and Desire in Christian Spirituality,* Rachel Hosmer organizes material around three classical analogies (the chariot from Plato's *Phaedrus*, the net and the keys from biblical texts) and two contemporary ones (genetic imprint and gravity). The author conveys the commonsense importance of technical terms — for example, "critical," meaning "to distinguish," over against "fundamentalist" and "literalist." A "critical" reading, she notices, distinguishes between literal and other kinds of meanings, between various literary forms and sources, and between different strands of editorial work. Hosmer's readings of the Genesis creation story, passages from the Gospels, *Phaedrus*, Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*, Augustine, Dante's Beatrice, and Ju-

Gender and God: Love and Desire in Christian Spirituality, *by Rachel Hosmer, Cowley, $7.95, 142 pp.*

MARY GERHART *teaches hermeneutics, religion, and literature at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.*

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lian of Norwich, are fresh and reconstructed in the context of human relationships. Hosmer is an Episcopal priest and one of the founders of the Order of St. Helena.

The Mother's Songs: Images of God the Mother, by Meinrad Craighead, is an extraordinarily affordable collection of thirty-seven 7 1/2 by 11-inch brilliant color plate reproductions. To those seeing her work for the first time, Craighead's art recalls the bold images and spatial freedom of Chagall, the wind-driven symbolism of William Blake, and the elegance of Gustav Klimt. Her ink

***The Mother's Songs: Images of God the Mother**, by Meinrad Craighead, Paulist, $9.95, paper, 79 pp.*

paintings reproduced here are enhanced by brief texts, sometimes autobiographical, always poetic. Craighead's work has been exhibited in five countries, and she has taught art and art history at several universities. This is a book to ponder and enjoy.

Carolyn Osiek, who teaches New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, has written a book addressed to women "convinced of the validity of the feminist critique of institutional religion" and desiring *not* to leave the church. Hers is a brief but pointed argument. In chapter one, Osiek describes women whose eyes have been opened to the systematic oppression of their sex in the church and their initial experience of fear, rejection, and complex anger. Chapter two outlines "ways of coping": marginalist (staying at the fringe of church life), loyalist (standing by the institution for the sake of a "greater good"), revisionist (assuming that the institution will reform itself if the truth of the past is made sufficiently clear), liberationist (taking a "stand on behalf of the disenfranchised and the disinherited"). Chapter three surveys the kinds of conversions that accompany a liberationist stance: structural, personal, transformative, transformatively feminist, transformatively ecclesiastical—leading to a "transformation of women." Chapter four is

***Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church**, by Carolyn Osiek, Paulist, $4.95, paper, 93 pp.*

a critical analysis of the "price to be paid." *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church* is an important book which makes sense of the new paradigm now emerging in the church.

The subtitle of *Christian Feminism* by Mary Bader Papa—"Completing the Subtotal Woman"—is tongue-in-cheek as are many of her vigorous responses to comments like the following: Just what's so *unjust* about women's lives? How can privileged American women even begin to compare their grievances to the pressing injustices that others suffer? Why doesn't Sister Theresa Kane take a lesson from Mother Teresa instead of being concerned with the "selfish" interests of women? Sister Mary Luke

***Christian Feminism; Completing the Subtotal Woman**, by Mary Bader Papa, Fides/Claretian, $5.95, 186 pp.*

Tobin, who wrote the foreword to this book, comments that Vatican II, which she observed, barely discerned the insights of the women's movement. The responses of this book to blunt oversights are witty and informed. Reason is here, not so much as argument as repartee and information, for both women and men.

The Feminist Mystic and Other Essays on Women and Spirituality, edited by Mary E. Giles, is a daring "integration and definition" of two terms— feminist and mystic—and their "expanded connotations." The title essay is on Catherine of Siena who, in an age when a woman's realistic options were either marriage or convent, rejected both, and on Theresa of Avila who "did what she could do." In "Take Back the Night," Giles interprets the feminist call to political action in relation to apophatic (negative) mysticism. In "Immanent Mother," Meinrad Craighead explicates her experience of creative spirit as "Mothergod," "generatrix," and "divine immanence." Margaret Miles writes on "The Courage to Be Alone—In and Out of Marriage," Wendy Wright on "The Feminine Dimension of Contemplation," and Dorothy Donnelly on "The Sexual Mystic: Embodied Spirituality." The concluding essay, "Armed with a Burning Patience:

***The Feminist Mystic and Other Essays on Women and Spirituality**, ed. by Mary E. Giles, Crossroad, $8.95, 159 pp.*

Reflections on Simone Weil" by Kathryn Hohlwein, argues by example for the definition implied in the title of the book.

Linda A. Bell has collected passages about women and anthologized them in her book, *Visions of Women*. The passages are by well known philosophers (such as Plato, Aristotle, Zenophon, Maimonides, Montaigne, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Diderot, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, J.S. Mill, Engels, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Santayana, Gilman, and deBeauvoir) and theologians (such as Tertullian, Jerome, Kierkegaard, and James). The passages were selected for representing classic answers to the questions, "What is woman?" "What do women want?" "What ought women to do?" and "Are women human?" This is a valuable

***Visions of Women**, by Linda A. Bell, Humana Press, $39.50, 516 pp.*

reference book, revealing how thinkers struggled (or failed to struggle) with the gender issue in their time.

These books remind us that the consequences of equality for women affect all women and men—both directly and indirectly. Through these authors we glimpse a world that is larger, more complex, and potentially better because more discerning than the one we inhabited before 1970.

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(about residents of Amarillo, Texas, where nuclear bombs are assembled; *Commonweal*, September 26) need to be read along with *Hope in Hard Times* in order to hear the full range of popular responses to living in the nuclear age.

Destroying earthly hells

THE DEVIL AND DR. CHURCH

F. Forrester Church
Harper & Row, $12.95, 88 pp.

Eliot Janeway

JUST eighty-eight pages — and chock full of wisdom, sharpened with wit and learning, leavened with love of people in need. Charisma and erudition do not usually go together. Charisma and substance do not usually make for reading on the run. Forrester Church combines them with authority worn casually, as literature unveiling philosophy, as analysis threaded by anecdote, and as advocacy preached with the force of humility but voiced with satire born of experience. His citations range from Scripture to Upton Sinclair, from Dante to Dostoyevsky to Huxley. He is deft in riding them all and more in his race to keep up with the Devil, the alter-ego of God and each of us.

Church reveals his qualifications up front for writing this account of our ancient and guileful traveling companion. He knows first hand, as he is demonstrating in his ecumenical and compassionate mission at All Souls Unitarian Church on Manhattan's Gold Coast. He blends his evangelism with his heritage from the hurly-burly of politics. His father was the late, great chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, his mother's family Democratic dynasts in Idaho. His sociological markings enliven his theology, broaden the reach of his ethical message, and enlist him in the crusade for nuclear peace.

The roadmap Church relies on to pursue the elusive trail to God tracks the tricky appearance of the Devil. Church reminds us that the Devil among us is cloaked in virtue. "He almost always appears in drag." Satan aspired to be an author, thereby unmasking his pride and explaining his fall; and Shakespeare saluted him as a gentleman.

Unitarians have been viewed askance by hardcore believers as soft on God, and by hard-core atheists as simply soft-headed. From the archives of All Souls itself, Church fishes up a confrontation that shows they can be self-defeatingly hard-headed too. "God's shadow side," as he calls the Devil, infiltrated the Congregation in the fight over slavery. Its minister was a German, Charles Follen, in fact, a professor of German literature. He was also an abrasively militant abolitionist, hellbent on bringing moral issues into collision with political convenience. The coincidence of Follen's dialect and his dialectic gave the Devil a heaven-sent chance to get him purged. Satan contrived to persuade the respectables in the congregation that they could not understand the message of their minister. His German accent muffled his clarion call.

Church's pen arms urbanity with dynamite, and facility with urgency. "The Devil is way ahead of schedule," he warns, quoting Aldous Huxley's novel about 2105, written in 1948.

> Even without the atomic bomb, Belial could have achieved all His purposes. A little more slowly, perhaps, but just as surely, men would have destroyed themselves by destroying the world they live in. . . . An orgy of criminal imbecility. And they call it progress.

So *The Devil and Dr. Church* is comparative literature at its best, doing double duty as a call to political and ethical responsibility sanitized against the sanctimoniousness of Satan. The sanity of Church's call to transform our hell on earth into a heaven within our reach clears our minds to cope with the nuclear menace. The theme of his book is that if we don't deal with it, it will dispose of us.

Church gives a tender but pointed moral for the young reared in illiterate captivity to televised violence. He is nostalgic about childhood longings for freedom, but grim in assessing ignorance of how to use freedom. He refers us to Dante's sketch of the goings-on in the eighth circle of Hell. It arms us for dealing with economists as the necessary evils they are in getting down to earth. Dante puts diviners, astrologers, and magicians on display with their heads turned backwards. They were the forefathers of our modern breed of forecasters.

To emphasize the need for realistic response to the peril in which we live, Church offers a tale with a twist for Satan's tail. A tunnel-visioned researcher first trains a flea to jump on command; then clips its front legs and repeats the command. When the flea jumps, and jumps again after its middle legs are clipped too, its rear legs are clipped. After the researcher orders it to jump again, and the flea fails to respond, the experimenter pronounces it deaf. We are the flea. *The Devil and Dr. Church* is a prod for ears to hear while we can still jump.

REVIEWERS

PEGGY ROSENTHAL, *author of* Words and Values *(Oxford University), is a member of the Genesee/Finger Lakes Nuclear Disarmament Network.*

ELIOT JANEWAY *is the author of the Janeway Letter. His latest book is* Prescriptions for Prosperity.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 674)

burst and the froth subsides, the pathways are plain enough: Let those who wish to follow St. Peter's successors remain in the Catholic church. Let those who think they know better about faith and morals seek whatever comfort they may find in other denominations or religions or self-started congregations or none. The church will survive the departure. As she has.

PATRICK GRATTON

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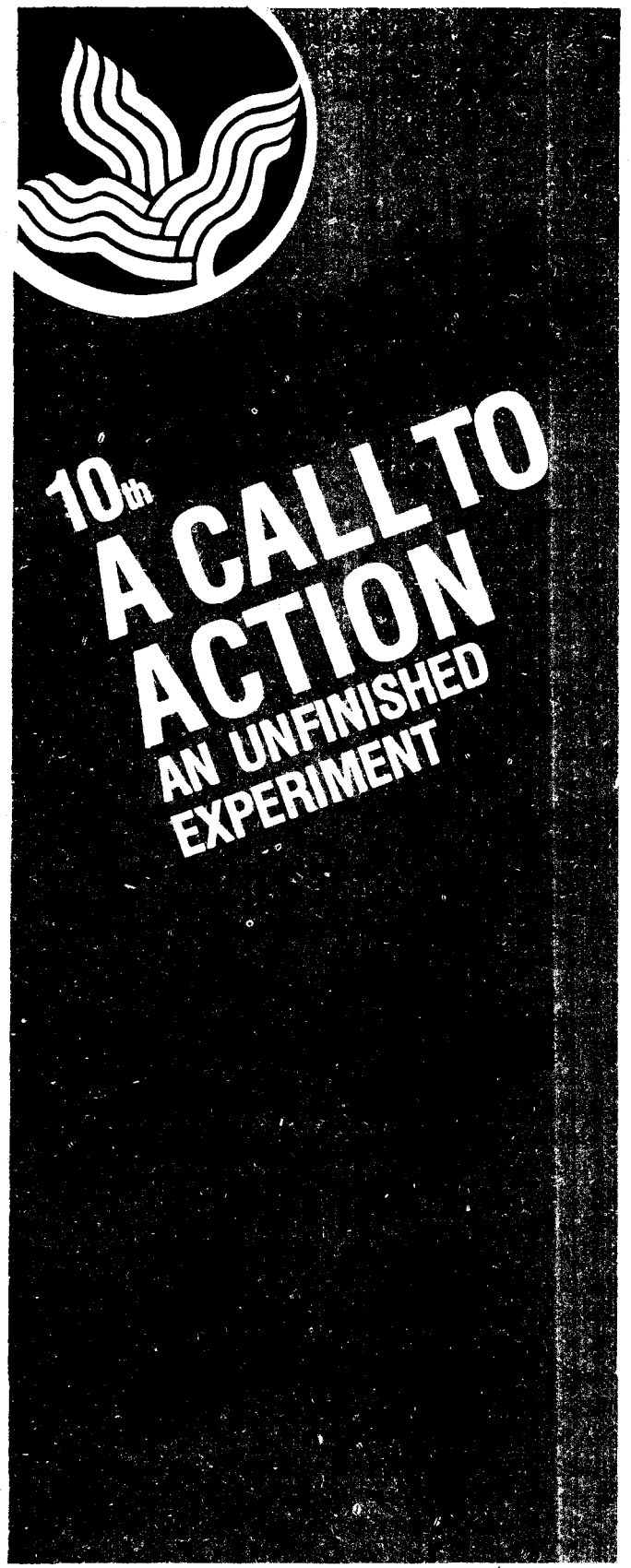

"I remember only two things about the American Bicentennial celebration in 1976," says John Carr, secretary for social concerns for the archdiocese of Washington, D.C. "One was the tall ships in New York's harbor. The other was A Call to Action, the bishops' bicentennial program."

There have been repeated attempts to recapture the excitement of the tall ships, most recently at last summer's Statue of Liberty festivities. But Call to Action? John Carr may remember it, but how many others? Call to Action was the closest the American Catholic church has ever come to holding a genuine national assembly. It was a massive three-year program in which hundreds of thousands of U.S. Catholics participated. Its culminating conference, held in Detroit in October 1976, created sensational headlines and provoked heated responses, both pro and con. Yet even the best recent Catholic histories mention the Call to Action only in passing, if at all. Sister Alice Gallin, O.S.U., executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, registered this fact at a symposium *Commonweal* sponsored last October to mark the tenth anniversary of the Detroit meeting. By 1977 the momentum of the Call to Action program appeared to be broken; for many, the whole effort was soon half-forgotten. Yet Call to Action had accomplished two things that would have a crucial impact on the church in the years that followed. It had solidified the central place of social justice in the life of American Catholicism, and it had experimented with a process of consultation on an unprecedented scale. Close observers would see the strong influence of Call to Action in the way the bishops set about writing their major pastoral letters on nuclear war and on the U.S. economy. Noting that the Call to Action symbol was a flame of liberty, Alice Gallin compares the whole experience to one of those industrial chimneys that belch forth a flame, then swallow it again, only to let it blaze forth in a new form some while later.

But if Call to Action deserves to be remembered, it also deserves to be reevaluated. What were the Call to Action's special strengths? What were its weaknesses? What happened at Detroit, and why was the momentum of the program lost? What lessons can be drawn for future efforts in broadening participation and sharing responsibility in the church?

Americans have notoriously little historical sense. Which forces us repeatedly to reinvent the wheel. Which deprives us of the wisdom and patience that come with a long-range perspective. As the church looks forward to the 1987 synod on the laity, the experience of a decade past should be brought to mind. *Commonweal* wishes to thank the Catholic Communication Campaign which provides essential funding for the symposium held in October and for this special supplement.

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A NEW WAY OF DOING THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

DAVID J. O'BRIEN

On October 21, 1976, some 2500 Catholic bishops, priests, religious, and lay people assembled in Detroit for the final conference of "A Call to Action." For three days they prayed, worshiped, and debated a host of subjects ranging from religious vocations to nuclear disarmament. In the end they voted approval of thirty resolutions containing over 180 recommendations to be presented to the nation's bishops. The conference climaxed a two-year program of consultation among American Catholics organized in celebration of the United States' bicentennial.

A Call to Action was unique. Convened by the bishops, with the majority of its delegates appointed by them, participants had reason to believe, as John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit told them at the opening session in Detroit's Cobo Hall, that they were "beginning a new way of doing the work of the church in America."

Three years earlier, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) had voted to dedicate its bicentennial observance to the theme of justice in the world, and to hold a national conference on that theme in 1976. Its purpose would be to advise the bishops on how the American church could respond to Pope Paul VI's "Call to Action" for justice, and implement the 1971 synod of bishops' statement on "Justice in the World." The bicentennial seemed to provide an excellent opportunity to familiarize Catholics with the social teaching of the church while developing a plan of action to mobilize church resources for a more effective witness on behalf of justice and peace.

The idea of the Call to Action conference was spawned by the Advisory Council of the United States Catholic Conference, a little known body composed of priests, religious, and lay people appointed by the bishops. It had been examining the feasibility of a national pastoral council for the United States, but after extended consultation, concluded that such a council would be premature. The Advisory Council then proposed that several less formal, national assemblies might serve as experiments in shared responsibility. Sr. Marie Augusta Neale suggested that these deal first with justice and be held in connection with the bicentennial. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops gave its approval to this suggestion, and John Cardinal Krol, then president of the NCCB, asked Cardinal Dearden to assume leadership of the project.

A committee of bishops was quickly formed and three subcommittees appointed. The first, dealing with liturgy, was chaired by Boston's Humberto Cardinal Medeiros. It prepared several liturgical booklets for use during the bicentennial, but was superseded by the decision to hold an International Eucharistic Congress under Krol's sponsorship. The second dealt with history and was chaired by Edward A. McCarthy, bishop of Phoenix (now the archbishop of Miami). This committee, assisted by leading historians, formulated a national policy on archives, arranged for several television productions, and sponsored publications on American Catholic history in the Catholic press, and later in book form.

The third subcommittee, on the justice conference itself, was chaired by Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati. Its leadership later passed to Archbishop Peter Gerety of Newark when Bernardin became NCCB president in November 1974. Staff work was coordinated by Bishop James Rausch, general secretary of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), a strong advocate of social justice and world peace.

When Cardinal Dearden's *ad hoc* committee met for the first time in July 1973, it endorsed a planning document prepared by Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, director of the USCC Division of International Justice and Peace. Hehir urged the committee to counter the tendency of other national bicentennial celebrations to offer "an uncritical consecration of the American system" by insisting that the justice theme inform the church's bicentennial program throughout. As for the 1976 conference, he hoped it could be an event comparable to that which had taken place at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, when the bishops of Latin America had set new goals aimed at closer identification with the poor. Medellin, Hehir claimed, had been "a watershed in the development of the church's life between quite different understandings of the church's nature and mission." If the justice conference was to have a similar impact, it would have to be the "beginning of an institutional process of reflection, planning, witness, and action" for the church in the United States. The product would be a statement to the nation through a series of documents containing analysis and pastoral plans of action. While the total program should aim at wide participation, the key people would be experts who would prepare and revise the documents.

It was an ambitious vision, but one the Dearden committee approved and directed Bernardin's subcommittee to flesh out.

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In December 1973 that committee met with a group of consultants on international issues. Hehir emphasized the need for wide participation in the process, saying American Catholics would not accept a plan imposed on them from the top down. They would have to share in the process of defining goals if they were to share in implementing them. The consultants agreed and went further. They insisted that popular participation would turn on whether people were convinced that the bishops would in fact act upon the advice they received. But Bernardin was more cautious, pointing out that the hierarchy was committed to nothing more than holding a conference in 1976.

In March 1974 when the committee met on domestic issues, the problems of participation and credibility once again dominated the discussion. Michael Novak went furthest, insisting that the program should provide the Catholic people with the opportunity to set their own agenda for justice. By now the movement of the committee was clearly away from Hehir's emphasis on the product — an organized agenda for institutional reflection — and toward process and participation. At a two-day meeting in April, Novak further proposed that the title of the program be "Liberty and Justice for All," and that it be organized around social "organisms" which he named as church, family, neighborhood, ethnicity and race, personhood, nationhood, and humankind (later *work* was added to these topics). The procedure would involve grass-roots participation through parish discussions, aided by a study guide prepared under the committee's sponsorship, and regional hearings at which panels of bishops would take testimony from experts and ordinary Catholics. The results of this consultative process, the committee agreed, would be gathered into a set of preliminary recommendations to be considered by the 1976 conference, which would be as representative as possible.

The planning process highlighted several crucial facts about the church in the United States. For one thing it had become more voluntary; everyone agreed that if any pastoral plan of action was to have broad support, it would have to arise out of popular participation. Second, if the program were to gain this support, it would have to examine justice within the church itself as well as in society. Finally, everyone recognized that a high degree of skepticism existed about the bishops' intentions, and their willingness to act upon the advice they would receive in response to their invitation to speak up.

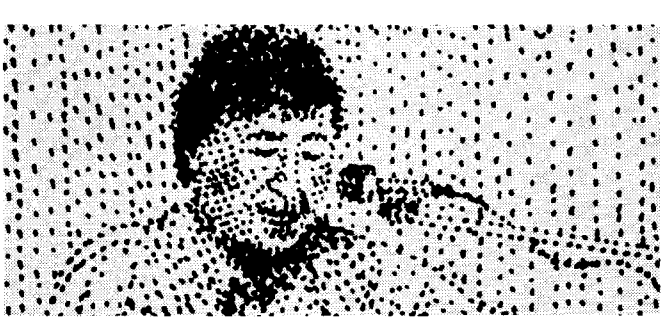
Controversy arose even before the program began. Father Andrew Greeley attacked the discussion guide prepared by the committee as the work of a new breed of radical social activists bent on turning the church in the revolutionary direction associated with liberation theology. The program's supporters, he charged, were anti-American and had little appreciation of the needs and experiences of ordinary Catholics. This gave conservative Catholics, worried about the church's increasing involvement in social issues, powerful support in resisting the program from the start.

Nevertheless, almost half the nation's dioceses organized parish discussions in connection with the Call to Action. Some, like Memphis, Hartford, and Los Angeles, held diocesan conventions to act upon their results. Seventy-nine of the country's 162 dioceses submitted "feedback sheets" which indicated that over 800,000 people had participated. Material of some kind came back from over 100 dioceses.

It was the regional hearings, however, which brought the program to national attention. The first of the hearings was held in Washington, D.C., where local protests against the list of invited guests led to a decision to place the planning of future hearings in the hands of local committees, and to insist that time be made available for testimony from anyone who requested to appear. In addition, written testimony was welcomed, and booklets containing a transcript of all the advice received were printed and made generally available.

The hearings demonstrated the power of the church as *forum*. Individuals came before the bishops to present often moving accounts of injustice in deeply personal terms. In Washington, Bishop Donal Lamont, recently exiled by the white government of Rhodesia, captured media attention with his description of conditions in that embattled nation. In San Antonio, Hispanic parents told of the hardships of their lives and the power of their faith. In Minneapolis, there was testimony from small farmers, American Indians, and Catholic parents worried about the education of their children. In Newark, working-class Catholics described the problems of changing neighborhoods, and Dr. Leona Edwards told of the discrimination visited upon her family in a lifetime of devotion to the Catholic church. In Atlanta, after a day of hearings, the bishops traveled to Tidy Creek, Georgia, where they listened under a revival tent as dozens of mountain people spoke of unemployment, soil erosion, brown and black lung, all before network television cameras and representatives of the national press.

Not only did these hearings model an open and listening church, but they demonstrated the ability of the church to offer poor and oppressed people access to the national conscience. The hearings also demonstrated that the process of speaking and listening could change hearts and minds. In Atlanta, for example, a representative of families in the Military Ordinariate chatted with a member of Dignity. A prisoner and a prison warden offered joint testimony about the suffering they witnessed every day. It was the personalized testimony of ordinary people which put flesh on the themes of theology, and demonstrated both the persistence of injustice in American



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society and the presence of grace among its people.

The results of these "consultations" were turned over to eight writing committees chaired by bishops. The committees prepared reports which summarized what had been said, reflected on the results in light of Scripture and church teaching, and presented a detailed set of recommendations. Remarkably, seven of the eight committees achieved unanimity, raising serious questions about later charges that the recommendations departed from the mainstream of Catholic life. Only the committee on personhood failed to reach consensus. On such controversial issues as birth control, clerical celibacy, and homosexuality, its recommendations were shrouded in ambiguous language of "concern" and "the need for further study."

While the committees were writing these reports, the bicentennial staff collected the names of delegates from local bishops and national organizations. Once nominations were made, training sessions were arranged to familiarize participants with the process to be used at what was now known as the "Call to Action" conference. There the delegates would divide into eight working groups. Each of these would then subdivide into smaller sections around each of the three or four recommendations contained in the reports from the writing committees. Each recommendation would be considered and voted upon three times: in the small group assigned to that area, in the larger working group, and finally on the floor of the full assembly. To avoid intimidation of delegates, members of the staff and the writing committees were barred from serving as delegates or participating in discussion.

When Cardinal Dearden called the Detroit conference to order on Thursday, October 21, 1976, 1351 delegates sat under placards naming their dioceses, while over 1000 observers sat on bleachers at either end of Cobo Hall. After some skirmishing about inadequate representation of Poles and Hispanics, Dearden delivered the only major address of the conference. The goal of this "extraordinary assembly," he stated, was to "respond to the needs of our people," to "translate their sincere commitment to liberty and justice into concrete programs of action."

> All of us in this hall are against racism and war and hypocrisy and violence; all of us are committed to the Gospel. . . . The tough part is translating all that into action, translating it into a community of faith . . . translating it into a moral position on questions of public significance. . . . None of us knows for sure how best to do these things . . . so we have no choice if we are to be a community of both faith and freedom except to meet, debate, and make some decisions. This is what we are trying to do here. We are trying to begin a new way of doing the work of the church in America.

Following Dearden's address, the work of the conference began. Delegates gathered in the topic groups to question the writing committees and clarify their task. Smaller groups then gathered around each resolution, spending the rest of the day and well into Thursday night in intense discussion. Friday morning, eight section meetings debated, revised, and again voted on resolutions. On Friday afternoon the plenary assembly reconvened, voting once again on each of the recommendations considered for seven to ten hours in the small groups, and for another six to eight hours in the section meetings. Friday night the delegates adjourned for a marvelous liturgy, followed by a reception.

Saturday morning the delegates were back in their seats for a full day of lively debate, which lasted until 5 P.M. when the last and most difficult report on personhood was given final approval.

On the platform, Dearden and Apostolic Delegate Jean Jadot seemed to enjoy the sometimes emotional proceedings. Outside in the corridors, however, some bishops were expressing dismay at the scope of the resolutions, the pace of debate, and the apparent influence of "interest groups" such as Dignity and the Women's Ordination Conference. They stated their concerns to Bernardin and Rausch. Rausch was seen by many bishops as responsible for the event, and those who were not happy let him know it. On the floor, in contrast, other bishops, including Cardinal Krol, shared in the proceedings with grace as delegates voted on matters of church policy, up to then the exclusive concern of the hierarchy. Like Dearden, Krol was too strong a man to be easily shaken by such events. At one point in a small group meeting he told his fellow delegates with a smile: "You can vote for it, but you're not going to get it." At another point he surprised a progressive IHM sister by proposing insertion of Vatican II language on shared responsibility into a resolution. Later that night his party dined at the same restaurant as a group which included the sister. The cardinal sent her table a bottle of wine and together they toasted their church.

At five, Dearden closed the conference, telling the tired but exhilarated delegates that they had made some good decisions and some with which he and others might disagree. It was the first deliberative assembly of American Catholics. In the past they "had not often listened well to one another." Now they had all listened and tried their best to respond to the needs they had heard. But the real work had only begun.

Some months after A Call to Action, Joseph Cunneen, the editor of *Cross Currents*, noted that "the image of an event can easily displace the event itself." This general rule was never better illustrated than in the months which followed the warm, enthusiastic meeting in Cobo Hall. Before returning home, Archbishop Bernardin told reporters that "too much was attempted at the meeting" and "special interest groups advocating particular causes [had] dominated the conference as a whole." The *National Catholic Reporter*'s first issue following Detroit headlined Bernardin's criticism rather than the results of the meeting. The secular press gave almost exclusive attention to resolutions on birth control, homosexuality, clerical celibacy, and women's ordination, all but ignor-

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ing recommendations on racism, neighborhood development, housing, employment, family life, and religious vocations. (Almost no one pointed out that the first national assembly in American Catholic history had approved a near-pacifist resolution on disarmament.) Father Greeley described the participants as a "ragtag assembly of kooks, crazies, flakes, militants, lesbians, homosexuals, ex-priests, incompetents, castrating witches, would-be messiahs, sickies, and other assorted malcontents." He told the bishops they should "reassert their control over what goes on in the church."

There could be little doubt that the agenda had been crowded; the open-ended process of consultation, combined with the organizers' convictions that widely shared concerns should be heard at Detroit, had insured that there would be too many issues to be fully analyzed in ways suitable to experts and bureaucrats. Yet, with very few exceptions, the resolutions had been carefully constructed, first by the writing committees, and then, with surprisingly few changes, approved by the delegates. Despite claims that the assembly had been pro-birth control or pro-women's ordination, resolutions on those and other subjects had simply called for pastoral attention, further study, and openness to change.

Organizers had been careful to insist throughout that the process was designed to represent the concerns of those who had had the opportunity to participate and had chosen to do so. Realistically they had concluded that the Detroit assembly could only be composed of people named by the bishops, along with a minority of delegates from national organizations. The most striking fact gathered from a questionnaire of those who attended the Detroit conference was that 64 percent of those who responded were employed by the church. As one commentator noted, the assembly was representative of the church's "middle management" and of those priests, sisters, and lay people most active at the level of the diocese.

As for the so-called disproportionate role played by interest groups at Detroit, the most effective of which was the His-

Unrehearsed & unforgettable

Looking back, I see the entire program that culminated in the Call to Action conference as *one whole*. It is true that the Detroit conference was planned to be, and is seen as, a distillation of all that had gone before and as a vehicle for making concrete recommendations to the bishops' conference. The reality is that the proposals that had come from the local and diocesan groups were too numerous and, often, too substantial to be dealt with properly in just a few days. And no summary or discussion of these proposals by representatives in Detroit could ever capture the intensity of feeling — the joy and pride, the pain and anguish, the hope and trust — that was sensed at the local level. In my own memories of those months of hearings, the most poignant and moving of all that we heard could never be caught a second time. The unrehearsed plaint of a farmer who lived on the land he and his parents before him had tilled . . . the testimonies of blacks caught up in the seemingly hopeless cycle of metropolitan poverty . . . the simple narratives of migrant workers telling of the bleak anguish of rootlessness . . . all this was unrepeatable. From the beginning it was evident that the distorted judgment of the media — their emphasis on the sensational and their passing over the substantial deposit of positive and significant recommendations — hurt the public estimate of the value of the process and its results. Perhaps now in the calmer reflection of today's society we can see the entire enterprise in perspective. It did have value. It showed us an eager, awakened, and concerned church. It made us reflect on what it means to be a Catholic and how to live out that commitment responsibly in the United States today. That was a mature way to celebrate the bicentennial of our country.

Has all this affected the activities of the bishops' conference? In many ways I believe it has. It has reinforced the bishops' conviction about the value and necessity of consultation with the entire Christian community. Note the process involved in the drafting of the major pastorals on war and peace and the economic order. Note, too, the present series of consultations in preparation for the Synod on the Laity, 1987. Note also the more mature style of these pastoral letters. They make a clear distinction between what is basic Catholic teaching, and application of it in particular instances that might be open to different interpretations; and they call people to reflect upon and study these issues. Quite a different modus operandi from that of days past.

A great deal has been written and said about the bishops' conference response to Call to Action. It is important to remember that there are limits to what the conference can do. It cannot impose its will on its member bishops. Each bishop has special responsibilities that are uniquely his. That so much has been done through collaboration is a testimonial to the readiness of the American bishops to work together for the good of the church and its mission.

If we were beginning today, would we do it differently? Certainly, the process of hearings and grass roots involvement would be retained. Any concluding conference could profit greatly by limiting the scope and range of the issues to be dealt with, by directing the focus to those judged of highest concern. Discussion should be less hurried and more reflective. But the basic process and fundamental value of listening to the people would be safeguarded.

JOHN CARDINAL DEARDEN

(John Cardinal Dearden, the archbishop of Detroit from 1959-1980, headed the Call to Action program as chairman of the Bishops' Bicentennial Commission.)

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panics, the number and influence of such groups was no greater than those at any open, democratic assembly. Given the institutional involvement of the delegates, their level of education, and their appointment by their bishops, one can only conclude that the influence of such groups depended heavily on the quality of their arguments and the justice of their causes. While no one could argue that the short, intense debates of Detroit were the best way to determine church policy on complex matters, it was unfair to describe the groups as self-interested and the delegates as people easily manipulated or swayed by emotional arguments. Nevertheless, that image of A Call to Action persisted.

In some ways, the conference was almost too successful. The later surveys of delegates indicated that most arrived skeptical and left convinced that they had experienced the church in its fullness. But when they returned home, they often found their local bishop confused. He thought he had sent delegates to a conference on social justice; now he faced a cadre of enthusiasts anxious to reform diocesan procedures and broaden the religious agenda. Nationally, delegates thought they had begun a process of continuing consultation and cooperation. But the bishops had no mechanism available to continue such a process.

The reaction of the press aroused the suspicion of many bishops. In May 1977, Bishop Rausch faced a number of highly placed bishops quite angry at what he had brought about. He too became more cautious. Worst of all, Dearden's *ad hoc* committee which had been established to deal with the bicentennial had gone out of existence the previous December. Dearden's personal support was unwavering, but he had no position from which to influence the USCC bureaucracy unless he could persuade the bishops to take action at their May meeting. Before that meeting he became seriously ill. Along the way, the USCC bicentennial staff also disappeared.

Before it disbanded, the Dearden committee had drafted a plan of action which would assign the recommendations from the Detroit meeting to existing committees, and establish a new implementation committee of bishops to prepare the promised five-year plan of action. Bernardin, however, appointed a task force dominated by powerful conservative bishops to receive the Dearden committee's report and prepare for the May meeting. That body scrapped the new implementation committee and assigned the overview responsibility to the weak Advisory Council, which had no staff. They dropped the Dearden committee's draft message, wrote one of their own which emphasized the teaching authority of the bishops, and rejected out of hand many of the more controversial proposals.

When the bishops did meet in Chicago in May 1977, Bernardin warned of the dangers of "polarization and factionalism" arising from A Call to Action. The bishops divided into eight groups to discuss the Call to Action resolutions. Those who discussed the church and personhood overwhelmingly rejected suggestions for reconsideration of church teaching and discipline. The tone in the other six meetings was far more positive. When they reassembled, the bishops approved a proposal to replace the weak Advisory Council's overseer role, and appointed a new implementation committee. This committee eventually produced a plan of action which encouraged further work on well established efforts at social action and parish renewal.

In subsequent years the bishops would write pastoral letters on racism, cultural diversity, Hispanic concerns, nuclear weapons, and economic justice, incorporating stances taken by the Call to Action conference. But the problem which gave rise to the national consultation of the mid-seventies remained: the problem of shared responsibility and implementation.

The results of A Call to Action also indicated the still uncertain character of the episcopal conference. Established after Vatican II, the NCCB was still unclear about its relationship with Rome and with its own local dioceses. With no sense of a national church, with lack of clarity about the ecclesiological role of episcopal conferences, the organization's capacity to respond to a large reform agenda was distinctly limited. Furthermore, a decade after the Call to Action, the bishops are still far from being ready to accept the degree of collaboration involved in the Call to Action, while the need for building structures of shared responsibility remains clear to all who care to look.

Finally, however, A Call to Action had one undeniable and enduring legacy for those who participated in it. For them it was and remains an experience of church, an exciting moment when one caught a glimpse of what it might mean to be an American Catholic, a revelation of new possibilities. At the "Liberty and Justice for All" hearings and in Cobo Hall, there were rich and middle class and some poor; committed parishioners, and angry and alienated minorities; women and young people, blacks, Hispanics, and whites; lay people, sisters, brothers, and priests. Some years later, after working with a program of parish renewal, priest-sociologist Philip Murnion noted with only slight exaggeration that he had never attended a meeting of bishops, priests, religious, or laity meeting separately that accomplished very much; he had rarely attended one at which they met together that some progress was not made. At the former, the group tended to blame those who were not there for their problems; at the latter, people had to listen to one another, acknowledge their own shortcomings, and admit that they could do more working together than they could do fighting each other. A Call to Action, for those who took part, was that kind of meeting. At the opening session in Detroit, Cardinal Dearden had referred to the church as "a community of faith and friendship." Almost all who heard him that day knew what he meant by the time the conference was over. This was indeed a church filled with people of good will, great faith, compassion, and commitment.

DAVID J. O'BRIEN *teaches history at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. He participated extensively in the Call to Action regional meetings and worked full-time preparing the background documents for the Detroit conference. He is the author of a full-length, unpublished study of the Call to Action.*

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ONE WHO RIDES THE ROLLER COASTER

FRANCIS J. BUTLER

I cannot think of anyone less likely to coordinate a major national consultation on social policy than myself. But Bishop James Rausch — improvisator *extraordinaire* and General Secretary of the NCCB in the early seventies — thought otherwise.

Fresh from a job on Capitol Hill and currently working as a lobbyist for Catholic hospitals, I happened to meet Bishop Rausch at the U.S. Catholic Conference's annual picnic. The following day he summoned me to his office. He asked me if I'd like to direct a new campaign to stir up interest in a Constitutional amendment banning abortion. Rausch insisted that I'd be perfect for the job. After all, he reminded me, I knew my way around Capitol Hill — a qualification, I reminded him, even Washington cab drivers could meet. I told the bishop I was flattered by his confidence in me, especially since he had known me less than twenty-four hours, but my need for diversity, not to mention my inexperience, suggested that I'd be the wrong choice.

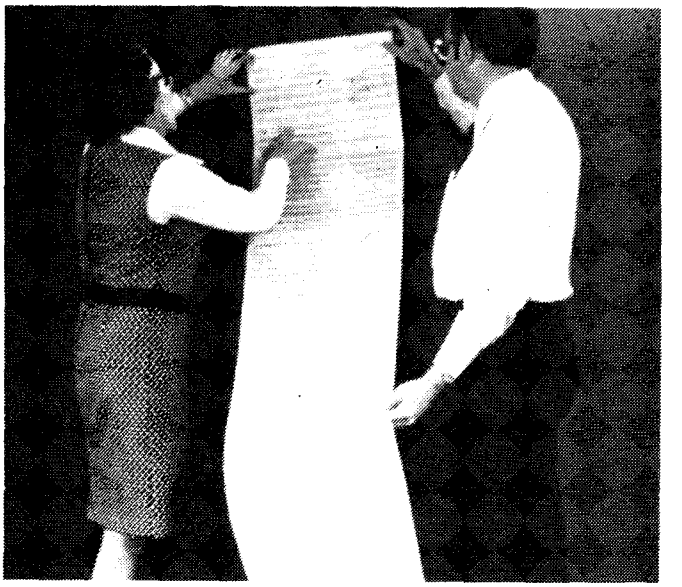
Days later I was back in Rausch's office. This time Jim was burning with excitement and madly puffing away on his Kents. He greeted me with, "You want diversity, I'll give you diversity." And like some fiery Hollywood director, he offered me a major supporting role in his blockbuster commemoration of the American Bicentennial. "You'll be perfect for this job," said Rausch. "You don't eat lettuce or grapes do you?" No, I responded, imagining that this had something to do with George Higgins or Cesar Chavez. "You've read *Rerum Novarum* and *Pacem in Terris,* haven't you?" asked Rausch. Why, yes, I declared. "Well, that's just superb," said Jim. "You'll be our new director for the bicentennial." Bicentennial? "Listen," he said, suspecting that I was going to turn down this offer, too, "you are only going to get a chance like this every two hundred years . . . so take the job."

Thus began a three-year term of service that I associate with the inexpressible feeling that comes over me whenever I board a very large roller coaster with my kids. I am inevitably sorry that I let them talk me into the ride — but I know I'll savor life more when the trip is over.

One night early on, when my anxiety level was high and I had been awakened by a bad dream of busloads of monsignors surrounding my house, I started worrying about how we would begin the bicentennial consultation. Yes, I had read the papal encyclicals, but I had never organized anything in my life before — besides hearings. . . . That's it! And thus was born the listening process for the Catholic church in the United States. Want to put that pastoral letter together? Try a hearing! Don't know what to do about that clergy shortage in your diocese? Crank up a listening process! Just installed as a bishop of a diocese and aren't sure how to get moving? Discernment, my friend! Yes, that's right, hearings are educational, therapeutic, and best of all they get you started doing something.

Our hearings were all this and more. No wonder Archbishop Peter Gerety spent much of 1975 outside of the archdiocese of Newark. He was overseeing the most vivid and amusing road show since the Canterbury Tales. Central casting could not have improved upon the colorful and contrasting personalities we discovered in the every-other-month series of three-day hearings. From Ted Hesburgh to Nia Ica Umba, from Bayard Rustin to Dorothy Day, from Cesar Chavez to DePaul Genska, from Walter Mondale to Henry Greencrow, from Andy Greeley to Simus Kudirka, the Lithuanian sailor who jumped a Russian ship off Martha's Vineyard just to be with the bishops.

And if the witnesses were not entertaining enough, we had little floor shows. Like the three-hour "dance of the circle" performed by American Indians in the Twin Cities. Little did



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What they voted in Detroit

The Call to Action resolutions voted in Detroit were organized in eight areas:

Church: The delegates called for collective bargaining and just compensation for church employees, national standards of due process for grievances and annulments, financial accountability, local participation in selection of pastors and bishops, protection of free speech and theological discussion, support for Catholic schools, elimination of sexist language, the possibility of a married clergy, acceptance of laicized priests in non-sacramental ministries, dialogue on the ordination of women.

Ethnicity and race: The church should live up to its own teachings on racial and ethnic equality. Delegates advocated affirmative action and respect for cultural pluralism in all church ministries, and appointment of more ethnic, black, and Hispanic bishops.

Family: Delegates reaffirmed Catholic commitment to the indissolubility of marriage but asked for pastoral understanding for divorced and remarried Catholics and dialogue on their readmission to the sacraments. They called for extensive programs of family ministry, family-centered worship and training, and opposition to economic and cultural forces threatening family life.

Personhood: Delegates generally affirmed the bishops' pro-life efforts; opposed capital punishment; backed rights of conscience on birth control; asked for a reconsideration of *Humanae Vitae*; called for sex education involving parents, more sensitive pastoral care for "sexual minorites" and victims of rape, and an openness of the church toward women, youth, elderly.

Work: Delegates advocated a national commission on economic justice, a pastoral letter on equal opportunity, ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, support for unionization, social justice teaching in Catholic education, use of church investments for third-world justice.

Neighborhood: Parishes, and diocesan agencies should support community organizations and reach out to the alienated, elderly, or handicapped.

Nationhood: Delegates again affirmed pro-life and anti-discrimination policies. They urged a variety of committees, task forces, and educational programs to consider disarmament, crime, full employment, housing, etc., and generally to implement the Call to Action.

Humankind: Delegates wanted a peace and justice office in every diocese, plus education and support for human rights, hunger relief, and international economic justice. They condemned all arms sales abroad and "the production, possession, proliferation, and threatened use of nuclear weapons . . . even in a policy of deterrence."

we suspect that this was actually a form of retribution for past injustice to Indians on the part of the church.

The pace quickened. I was convinced that the Bataan March was a picnic compared to our program. A pilot discussion program had been conducted — a full blown program adopted in most of the nation's dioceses. There was now a ten-member panel of graduate students reading truckloads of parish discussion reports under the watchful eye of Sr. Alice Gallin, Ursuline professor turned activist. There were eight writing teams assembling; facilitators were being trained by Sr. Margaret Cafferty, convent school marm turned community organizer.

Suddenly it was October 1976, and thousands of Catholics descended upon Detroit.

As well organized as we were, some things we just didn't anticipate. We asked for registration fees, for example, but no one ever realized the consequences. I remember walking to my hotel after the first evening with $25,000 in the Murder Capital of the World at 2:00 A.M.

And there was Breakthrough. No. Not a breakthrough, but Breakthrough — an ultra-right gate-crashing crowd as endearing as the National Socialist Youth Party — who kept the Detroit police very busy during our conference. I took a left hook from one of these nasty people when I naively suggested after they had been thrown out of Cobo Hall that perhaps they would like to join us for Mass.

One of the best surprises about the Detroit conference was the press. No one was ready for them. On the opening evening, Bob Wonderly pulled me away from the xerox machine to tell me that I had better come quickly. There were no bishops about and the press wanted to talk to an official of the NCCB. So, I and a few others found ourselves in front of a bank of microphones and a whole planeload of reporters who were anxious to talk about what all this activity had to do with Catholic sexual ethics.

With the close of the conference I looked forward to the peace that I thought would follow. But the drama was not over. A theological debate was raging about the text of a response to the Detroit meeting. Tempers were now short even among friends. Our chairman, Cardinal Dearden, ended up in the hospital; our general secretary was shipped off to Phoenix; our staff was virtually shut down save for a paper exercise that would make any bureaucrat proud squeezing the results of what was probably the most dynamic movement in the American church into twenty-six episcopal committees for evaluation. Yet six months later, in May 1977, came an NCCB statement on Call to Action which in the main was positive.

Had I not accepted Jim Rausch's invitation, I might still be walking the halls of the Capitol for Catholic hospitals. Four years later, as I was leaving the NCCB, I received a very beautiful letter from Cardinal Dearden, who said that he shared the confident belief that, when judged through the perspective of history, the bishops' bicentennial project will be seen to have been a very significant moment indeed in the history of the U.S. church.

I too have no doubt about that.

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IF THE BISHOPS MEANT WHAT THEY SAID

DOLORES L. CURRAN

When I was reminded that this was the tenth anniversary of the Call to Action, I was surprised at the memories and emotions that event triggered in me. As a member of the Writing Committee on Family, I recall the electric atmosphere of the first gathering of the various writing committees in Washington, during which we received background and instructions. Many feelings surfaced, but two — hope and skepticism — predominated throughout the whole process.

If the bishops really meant to listen to the people, we knew it would be exhilarating to be part of the process. But a strong underlying suspicion persisted that the immense effort we were putting into Call to Action would come to naught.

I find it interesting that those same two feelings predominate in me ten years later. I can't speak for the participants in other sections, but in the committee on family we never really believed that our episcopal leaders would act on issues like divorce, remarriage, birth control, the myriad of other issues requested by the laity in the consultation process.

The late Jim Young, who was suffering attacks from many bishops and other groups for his early efforts in divorce ministry at the time, served on our committee, and his experience was a constant reminder to us of what we were likely to encounter as we got into touchy family areas. Even the issue of women working outside the home was, at that time, a hotly debated moral issue.

The Detroit meeting was a bittersweet experience for many of us. I recall sitting with Jim Young as Marriage Encounter couples, clergy, and bishops spoke heatedly against ministry to the divorced. Dire predictions surfaced: "If we accept the divorced, it will do away with the sacrament of marriage," and "Once we begin to minister to the divorced, we'll have a rush of Catholics to the divorce courts." Jim leaned over to me and said gently, "They forget about the woman at the well, don't they?"

As members of the writing committee, we were not allowed to speak in behalf of issues at Detroit. We were there to answer questions and supply information and clarification on the resolutions we helped prepare. So we were cast in the role of observers.

Some memories stand out. Diocesan delegations sat en masse so we began to watch voting patterns. In some groups, the delegates would wait to observe how their bishop voted, then they would vote likewise. In two delegations seated near us, every vote on every issue was unanimous until the bishops left momentarily. Then the votes split until the bishops returned. These bishops looked at their delegates during every vote to see how they voted. In other dioceses, however, there was much more freedom, and votes were usually split on issues. I wonder whether the results of Call to Action would have been significantly different if there had been secret balloting.

I recall the Detroit newspapers quoting Cardinal Krol's quip on the equality for women issue. He said something to the effect that a bunch of women in tennis shoes weren't going to push the church around. Spontaneously, paper tennis shoes appeared on hundreds of lapels of males and females.

I remember, too, the distinctly unpleasant and un-Christian attacks made by the *Wanderer* bunch on Dignity members who asked for ministry to homosexuals. Their public humiliation brought tears to the eyes of many delegates.

The high percentage of delegates who worked for the institutional church troubled me then and troubles me now. These delegates did not have to lose time from work or pay their own expenses as a more representative laity would have. Commis-

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The train leapt the tracks

For better and worse, time has dimmed my memory of much of the proceedings in which I participated in A Call to Action. What I recall is a mixture of trivia, strong debates, intense moments, sharp visual perceptions. I recall, for instance, the gentlemanly, scholarly, patient approach of John Cardinal Dearden; the sometimes searing testimony of those who appeared at the regional hearings; the debate over the appropriate symbol for the conference; and Bishop James Rausch's anger when he realized that the goal of the conference had not been realized: "We wanted to put the conference in the hands of the people, but instead it's in the hands of the experts."

Looking back, I would maintain that the purpose and goals of the Detroit conference were admirable, but that in the execution, the train left the tracks. The conference began to break down with the selection of delegates and the mandate that was given them. First, the delegates: In spite of efforts to reach out to the non-"professional" Catholic, those who were selected were in a sense self-selected. They frequently worked in some organization and, not unnaturally, wanted to inject those goals into the considerations of the conference. Good enough, but no one can say they represented the sentiments of the larger Catholic community.

The mandate: The delegates, broken down into smaller groups according to interests and competencies, were told to review the reports of the writing committees and to make whatever changes they thought appropriate. The result was, at least in the section on humankind, a near disaster. It gave very short shrift to the carefully prepared report, and instead produced one that represented a near-pacifist approach to matters of war, peace, arms control, and arms sales. This happened because a small group of activist pacifists wanted a strong statement they thought would inevitably become diluted. But that is not what happened. As it turned out, their minority voice shaped the statement sent to the plenary session, a statement that was not in the mainstream Catholic tradition but, in fact, departed from it radically.

The plenary session: There was little time and almost no inclination to debate even the most questionable resolutions presented to the plenary session. Thus the participants were able to affirm contradictory positions simultaneously. They were able, for example to affirm support for Israel and to reject arms sales to any country, including Israel.

The follow-up: Given what was proposed by the conference, there was little chance that the resolutions would be enthusiastically received, even by bishops who were initially sympathetic to the Call to Action — and no chance that they would be received at all by other bishops. A Call to Action was, thus, almost doomed to be a disembodied voice, fading with the years.

What then is the legacy, or the residue of the Call to Action? The process was almost bound to attract activists with special interests, not the "ordinary" Catholic that Bishop Rausch and others had in mind. These activists not only ran head-on against the attitudes and beliefs of a significant minority of Catholics, but they failed to represent the views of many others in the Catholic community to whom the bishops were necessarily and properly responsive. Further, the list of recommendations grew to monstrous proportions. Useful, desirable, and possible proposals were buried under the more extreme proposals. Those who forwarded these proposals, encouraged by the support they had been given by the conference, were angered or dispirited by the lack of post-conference response.

Ten years after A Call to Action, it seems clear to me that the Catholic church in America is in need of reconciliation and healing. The call to which we might well respond would be a Call to Reflection.

JAMES FINN

(James Finn is the editor of Freedom at Issue, *a bimonthly publication of Freedom House.)*

sions and boards are still over-represented by employees of the church, which skews lay representation. It's a little like having Civil Service employees in D.C. consulted as representatives of the general voting population. Until we can come up with resources to allow laity not employed by the church to attend such gatherings, issues will continue to be judged primarily from an insider's perspective.

Family is one of the areas which evidenced significant results from the Call to Action. It was a relatively safe and non-controversial area and one the bishops chose to address as evidence of good faith in the consultation process. Almost immediately an Ad Hoc Commission on Marriage and Family was named to set up some kind of process to address issues and resolutions raised in the consultation.

Out of that ad hoc commission came the 1979 Pastoral Plan of Family Action which initiated the Decade of the Family (the eighties). Today most dioceses have Family Life Offices dedicated to developing like-to-like ministry in such diverse areas as aging, inter-faith marriage, grief, parenting, step-parenting, couple communication, family spirituality, unwed motherhood, and sexuality. No longer is family life relegated to the pre-eighties concept of marriage preparation and anti-abortion efforts. We find over 12,000 local chapters of Divorced and Separated Catholics operating in parishes.

Several colleges now offer master's degrees in family ministry, foremost among them Denver's unique Regis College Masters of Arts in Adult Christian Community Development which is drawing religious, clergy, and laity from all over the country as well as Australia, Ireland, Canada, and England. A nine-year-old professional organization, National Association

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of Catholic Diocesan Family Life Ministers, deals with government policy which affects families and offers resources to parishes and diocese. All this in ten years.

So Call to Action was not an exercise in closet collegiality. In spite of Andrew Greeley's assessment that those involved were kooks, the kooks have made a difference in how our church regards and works with families. Gone is the traditional practice of ministering to the approved two-parent (both Catholic) parish-supportive family without major problems. Instead, we find ourselves ministering to a myriad of family structures and hurts.

In looking over the Call to Action resolutions, I notice that much remains to be achieved, particularly the incorporation of family concerns into social actions and public policy; the issue of sex and violence in the media; and the issue of remarried Catholics. Some of the early fervor is diminishing, as evidenced by dioceses that closed Family Life Offices when Renew came along. These dioceses seem to have viewed family life ministry more as a fad than a commitment. But other Family Life Offices expand annually and their impact is being felt, particularly in the area of helping families recognize their strength, goodness, gifts, and ministry to others.

Was Call to Action worth the time and emotion we invested? I believe so. There were times I questioned the amount of time I gave — four working trips of two or three days each, writing and research projects which consumed other professional writing time, Detroit, the Ad Hoc Commission, and the many hours consumed by developing the Pastoral Plan — all at a time when my children were young and family needs were many.

I confess that when I read the acrimonious editorials by non-involved critics like Greeley, I felt devalued and foolish, wondering why I bothered to care enough to give my time.

But, in retrospect, I would probably do it again because I witnessed the incredible spirit of a great number of caring people working together in our church, and I realize that in spite of the institutional politics and differing visions of church ministry, the Spirit has a way of generating change through marginal people. That's probably why we'll not have another Call to Action in the foreseeable future.

NEW FACE ON AN OLD CRITICISM

DENNIS P. McCANN

Call to Action received strenuous criticism from the beginning. Most notable was Andrew Greeley's polemic against the 1975 discussion booklet, *Liberty and Justice for All*. Later, after Call to Action was little more than a wistful memory, Joseph Varacalli subjected it to acute ideological criticism in his full-length study, *Toward the Establishment of Liberal Catholicism in America* (University Press of America, 1983). There were, of course, hundreds of other critical commentaries, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Cobo Hall conference, when the specific resolutions as well as the way the conference was conducted drew fire from various camps. The Greeley and Varacalli critiques, however, are particularly worth reexamination, since they pointed to issues that remain alive ten years later.

Joseph Varacalli's thesis is that Call to Action represented something of a coup within the church, by which the "New Catholic Knowledge Class" came to dominate the USCC staff, and through them the NCCB itself. This "New Catholic Knowledge Class" is a Catholic counterpart of the New Class of socially activist academics, government bureaucrats, and media intellectuals that neoconservatives like Peter Berger, who directed Varacalli's study, are fond of denouncing. It is the moral passion animating this New Class critique that is most significant here. The innuendo surrounding this thesis concerning the "New Catholic Knowledge Class" suggests some sinister conspiracy: under the banner of social justice and church renewal, a bureaucratic elite is seeking to assert an unprecedented hegemony over episcopal decision-making in matters of doctrine and discipline.

The charge here is a subtle one. It is not that Call to Action was wrong because it reflected a budding insurgency among grassroots Catholics; rather Call to Action was wrong because it betrayed the concerns of ordinary Catholics in favor of the class interests of the new elite. Those disposed to ignore the proposals recommended in the Call to Action process could do so in good conscience, for the process was really only a carefully stage-managed exercise in manipulation. The conference's resolutions represented but one more tawdry exhibition of the struggle for power, the circulation of elites, which marks the history of any institution, including the church. They are not an emerging *sensus fidelium* deserving serious consideration on the part of established authority.

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Incompatible views of church?

Did Call to Action suffer from a confusion of ecclesiologies — a mix of incompatible understandings of the church? That was suggested by some of the participants in *Commonweal*'s October symposium marking Call to Action's tenth anniversary.

On the one hand, Call to Action emphasized the responsibility of all the baptized and fostered an unusual kind of direct dialogue between bishops and laity. On the other hand, the Detroit conference produced a great many resolutions essentially asking for action *from the bishops*. Likewise, a process that highlighted the *variety* of Catholic voices addressing issues of social justice in different ways also contained a strong impetus for the church to take a clear-cut and specific stand on socio-economic and political questions.

Participants in the symposium differed in offering explanations for these apparent discrepancies. Was there a genuine confusion in the minds of participants? Was the clash of ecclesiologies structured into a situation where laity ultimately had little real decision-making power and had to address their concerns for action to the bishops? Or did it simply reflect the fact that Call to Action was, as James Jennings said, "a massive experiment." According to Jennings, who now directs the Campaign for Human Development, "It's completely unrealistic to expect that there would have been clarity on the ecclesiological question going into the Detroit conference. We couldn't even begin to ask the question . . . until after we had the experience."

Jennings and many other participants agreed, however, that the questions raised about the meaning of church in 1976 are still in need of answers ten years later.

Andrew Greeley's contribution—an essay on "Catholic Social Activism: Real or Rad/Chic?"—which appeared in the *National Catholic Reporter* of February 7, 1975, did not go as far as Varacalli later went in identifying the architects of Call to Action with the "New Catholic Knowledge Class." But Greeley did attempt to drive a wedge between old-style Catholic activists like Msgr. Jack Egan and an allegedly new breed acting under the spell of Daniel Berrigan and the Washington-based Center for Concern. Certain essays in the Call to Action discussion guide, according to Greeley, were indicative of the incompetence and the wrongheadedly confrontational style of those captivated by "the Berrigan experience." Greeley was probably right about the essays he singled out for attack in the discussion, although his rhetorical excess unfortunately exaggerated the influence of radical social activists on the Call to Action process as a whole. If one can get beyond his denunciation of the Detroit meeting as "a ragtag assembly of kooks, crazies, . . . and other assorted malcontents," much may still be learned from his attempt to sketch an even *newer* style of Catholic social activism reconciling the passion of the "new breed" with the political savvy of the veterans. Nevertheless, given Greeley's influence at the time, his intervention did undermine Call to Action even before the newer style could fully emerge from the process of consultation.

What makes the criticisms of Greeley and Varacalli worthy of continued notice is their uncanny anticipation of controversies surrounding the bishops' recent pastoral letters. Just as there is continuity linking the pastoral-letter process with Call to Action, so is there continuity in the criticism. Greeley's challenge to the competence of Catholic social activists has found a response in the bishops' drafting committees' efforts to demonstrate competence in their public policy analysis. Greeley's fear that the USCC's openness to dialogue with various advocacy groups for "outsiders" might lead to an abdication of political responsibility has been acknowledged, at least tacitly, by the letters' concern to address the mainstream of American public opinion. Despite the tone in which it was delivered, Greeley's criticism in hindsight turns out to have been constructive.

The same cannot be said, unfortunately, for Varacalli's analysis. This post-Marxist (but semi-Marxist) dwelling on the social location of the "New Catholic Knowledge Class" and its drive for ecclesiastical hegemony has become, ironically enough, the focal point of the neoconservative attack on the pastoral letters. One need only review the series of articles appearing under the title "USCC Watch" by Philip Lawler (a one-time Heritage Foundation employee who headed an effort to establish a rival "American Catholic conference" and has recently been hired by Cardinal Law as editor of the archdiocesan *Boston Pilot*) or read Lawler's pamphlet, *How Bishops Decide: An American Catholic Case Study*, published earlier this year by Ernest Lefever's Ethics and Public Policy Center. The game has changed, the strategy remains the same. Since the bishops are presumably incompetent in the matters on which they have been making moral judgments, they are

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forced to rely on USCC staffers who, of course, are conspiring to promote the leftist liberal agenda of the New Class. Lawler is not alone among neoconservatives in wielding considerable rhetorical skill to persuade us of this thesis. The bishops' economic analyses lack credibility, according to Michael Novak, because they reflect only the views of those economists in synch with the USCC staff. By controlling the flow of information to the bishops and thus setting the restricted terms for their debate over matters of public policy, the "New Catholic Knowledge Class" maintains its hegemony.

To his credit, Novak recognizes that the issues separating neoconservative Catholic intellectuals from defenders of the pastorals are profoundly ecclesiological. Novak has written in sympathy with Cardinal Josef Ratzinger's challenge to the teaching authority of national episcopal conferences. In his counter pastoral letter, *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*, Novak has proposed a theological innovation which would restrict bishops from drawing any concrete applications from their understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching. Such "prudential judgments" would be reserved for the distinctive competence of the laity, presumably laity who, like the members of the self-appointed Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy which he, along with William Simon, chairs, remain untainted by the subversive efforts of the "New Catholic Knowledge Class."

The lessons to be learned by remembering Call to Action in our current chilly circumstances, it seems to me, have to do with how difficult the road must be for American Catholicism to realize responsibility. Genuinely open, consultative processes, like the one aspired to in Call to Action, will always be open to the charge of elitist manipulation by anyone hoping to discredit the outcome. By the same token, those who traffic in the profoundly modernist strategy of stressing ideological critiques like the New Class Theory will always be vulnerable to having the tables turned. Isn't the recent effort of neoconservative intellectuals to discredit the bishops' pastoral letter on the economy itself the most dramatic instance of an entrenched New Class conspiring to maintain its passing hegemony in public-policy debate?

Instead of abandoning our aspirations for genuinely open processes of consultation within the church, perhaps it would make more sense to submit once again to the discipline of public dialogue. The answer to the criticism of Call to Action is not less open-ended consultation but more of it. If the process is in danger — as any such process always will tend to be — of being manipulated by factions within the church, then let us all have the courage of our democratic aspirations and follow the advice of James Madison: expand the circle of participation so that it will be virtually impossible for any clique, no matter how noble their motives, to impose their will on others. Is it possible for American Catholics to become a church on that basis? One thing is certain: no further progress in that direction can be made unless we continue to risk genuinely open dialogue. Without controversy there can be no genuine consensus. Without consensus there can be no genuine community.

An explosion of possibilities

Somewhere a pile of notes testifies to my presence as a reporter in Cobo Hall during those scintillating Call to Action days in Detroit. Even if those lost notepads did materialize from my unfiling system, they would tell only part of the story that remains vivid in my memory.

Press coverage of the event was given low marks by many serious students of the process. I can understand their distress. A complex and multi-faceted bicentennial project was often reduced to the usual sexual politics of the church. Those who had labored so long and hard to strike prudent balances and weave delicate thematic tapestries had reason, I suppose, to be chagrined to see the work of their hands symbolized as a clenched fist raised against Rome.

Granting that, there was good reason for the response of myself and many of my press colleagues. We had never seen anything quite like it and may never again.

In conducting an exhaustive study of justice in America, the bishops had exercised the American tradition of free-flowing consultation and fact-finding. By the time Call to Action culminated in Detroit, the business of the church was no longer being done in normal fashion. The vision of a democratic church hovered over the place. That was remarkable. It was astounding. It was one of those rare moments in which an institution like the church gets out of control. I mean that as a compliment.

Little wonder that the press seized on sex. As important as many of the other topics were, they reflected church positions that had gained some currency. But Catholics speaking up about sex, in the broadest sense, and having their attitudes somehow ratified by a sort of quasi-official national convention? I dare say the press was not alone in seeing as extraordinary this expression of national character, both deeply Catholic and highly American.

The fact that such a large number of the delegates were hired hands of the church, hence not representative of the masses per se, was a telling criticism of the organizers but hardly a sufficient weapon to undermine the results. My instincts, whatever they are worth, tell me that a scientific cross section might have produced even stronger dissent. But that is only my hunch. Congress is less representative of rank-and-file Americans, and its members act much less like their constituents than did the Call to Action delegates.

Yes, Call to Action was flawed. But for me it was an exciting explosion of untethered possibilities.

KENNETH A. BRIGGS

(Kenneth A. Briggs, formerly religion editor of the New York Times, *is an author and columnist.)*

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RECALLING CALL TO ACTION: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

THE EDITORS

We remember glorious triumphs. We remember tragic defeats. We are all too apt to forget the episodes that fall in between, which are, after all, most of life: the modest successes, the brave failures, the moments when individuals or institutions strive to stretch beyond themselves with results that are bittersweet mixtures of achievement and disappointment.

The Call to Action was one such brave effort, and it had that kind of bittersweet outcome. When *Commonweal* sponsored a symposium last October, with the help of the Catholic Communication Campaign, to mark the tenth anniversary of Call to Action, about two-thirds of the participants had played significant roles in the events they were recalling. Archbishop Peter L. Gerety, recently retired archbishop of Newark, had presided, as chairman of the bishops' bicentennial conference subcommittee, over the regional hearings; he underlined the powerful impact those hearings had made on the bishops who worked with him. Sociologist Sister Marie Augusta Neal, who had seen the transforming power of Pope Paul VI's 1966 *Call to Action* and the 1971 episcopal synod's *Justice in the World* at work in South Africa and Latin America, recalled her hope that the American church might move beyond the paralysis which had frequently marked its response to the challenges of social movements in the sixties and seventies. Jane Wolford Hughes, who worked closely with Cardinal Dearden and headed the steering committee for diocesan coordinators, reported on the intricate process for developing materials and training leadership so that Catholics at the parish and diocesan level could genuinely participate and have their views registered in the national program. Pablo Sedillo of the USCC Secretariat for the Spanish Speaking noted the parallels between the Call to Action and Hispanic Catholics' experience with their national *encuentros*.

The symposium's participants did not gather just to remember and celebrate, however. They analyzed Call to Action's strengths and weaknesses to draw lessons for today's (and tomorrow's) church.

Much about Call to Action was paradoxical. Consider the very real shortcomings of the Detroit assembly in Cobo Hall.

Decades of disarray: a call to unity

What have the last ten years seen by way of realizing the Detroit resolutions of 1976? Any attempt at an answer must be a qualified one. At Detroit the delegates called again and again for a broader participation in framing policy and in executing action in all that pertained to the church. Has that principle been found to work on the diocesan and parish level? It has—and it has not—according to the willingness of the clergy and laity to yield to each other in a truly participatory way. According to a study of the National Pastoral Life Center, in those parishes where genuine participation obtained there were fewer defections than in those where participation was blocked by clerical intransigence or by extreme and unrealistic demands made on the part of the laity. In a word, it has been a blessing in some parishes, while in others the attempt has ended in a frustration that only furthered parochial division. Given human nature, this result should be no surprise. For a healthy ecclesial life in the time ahead, a policy of the fullest possible participation should be pursued in the hope that its success in certain dioceses and parishes will ultimately become the norm for others. In this way the *immobilisti* may be brought to see that there is no turning back to an era of virtually total clerical control, just as it may make clear to the laity that if they are to realize their rightful participation they must demonstrate an undoubted competence as well as a degree of moderation.

No thoughtful and discerning Catholic is today happy with the present condition of the American church. Would he or she be so if the more than one hundred resolutions passed at Detroit had been enacted? Frankly, no. Wide as the representation was at that gathering, it could not be said to have been a reflection of the approximately fifty million who then constituted the church's membership. More important, most of the disappointment that followed the event was the blame of no person or group but of the state of society in general. About a quarter century ago a profound revolution struck the Western world, the results of which are still with us. A few days after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the late Walter Lippmann, generally recognized as one of the wisest citizens of the Republic, wrote a sentence that I have pondered many times. "I know of

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Two-thirds of the delegates were church workers, leading critics to consider the meeting a reflection of "middle management." Appointed by bishops or by national Catholic organizations, over half the delegates were priests or women religious, while the laity were people already known and trusted by local church officials.

At Detroit, it was conceded, too many tried to do too much in too short a time. Again, the reasons had more to do with the underdevelopment of democratic mechanisms in the church than with their excess. First, the massive results of two years of regional hearings, parish discussions, and other consultations had to be channeled into a short-lived conference rather than handed over to a representative body of a more permanent nature.

Second, in order to assure that this conference's outcome would be assimilated into local planning, the organizers had decided that one-third of the diocesan delegates should be selected from the diocesan offices and agencies which would eventually be responsible for implementation. Another third were chosen from those in situations of social need (the poor, minorities, etc.) and a final third were chosen by parishes. With three delegates in each category—a total of nine from each participating diocese—plus representatives of national Catholic organizations—the Detroit conference was destined to be too large for the kind of plenary debate that might have refined and ranked proposals issuing from the detailed yet more narrowly focused committee discussions.

Third, the delegates voted without the constraints of real responsibility. There were no limited budgets to keep in mind, no trade-offs about available resources to confront. It was easy to construct a "wish list" of all the church should be and do, without making tough decisions about priorities.

Fourth, delegates strongly interested in getting support for one particular "plant" were less likely to submit others' resolutions to exacting scrutiny. In a few cases, the brief, one-time nature of the assembly reduced the pressure to negotiate differences and hammer out compromises. a pressure that had operated very strongly in the writing committees which synthesized the regional and parish proposals.

The shortcomings of Detroit should be neither glossed over nor exaggerated. At the *Commonweal* symposium, John Carr said of the conference, "You can say two things about it. It was the most representative group of Catholics assembled under the auspices of the national church, and it wasn't very representative at all. Both are true." According to David O'Brien, the Detroit meeting and the process leading up to it were unusual examples of real education. "I have been in education a long time; I have rarely seen people change their minds. But I saw people change their minds then." Still, giving Call to Action a passing or failing grade is not the point. The question is what can be learned from this experience?

One lesson is encouraging. A similar effort in the 1980s would probably not end up relying so heavily on participants directly working for the church. The intervening decade has seen the continued growth of local consultative bodies from which a wider range of lay representatives could emerge. On the other hand, what Cardinal Dearden candidly described in 1976 as the widespread doubts of many Catholics about "the ability of church leaders to take them seriously" have not been allayed; or, rather, if what Cardinal Dearden termed the nobody, and I've heard of nobody, who has come anywhere near to understanding fully and practically this revolutionary condition." If the ecumenical council of the 1960s disturbed many Catholics, the societal revolution that broke later in the decade deepened their perplexity and contributed significantly to the imbalance they still feel in their lives. In the face of this extraordinary "revolutionary condition," resolutions, however well intended and reasoned, were doomed to encounter a formidable obstacle.

What of the time ahead? In the ten years that have passed since the Call to Action congress, the single most serious problem for American Catholics, in my judgment, has become the divisiveness which has steadily mounted in recent years. I instinctively think of these things in terms of the American church's history. Only twice in the nearly two centuries since the consecration in 1790 of John Carroll as the first bishop of the United States, have Catholics of this nation known what one might rightly term serious crises, namely, the lay trustee troubles dating from about 1785 until the Civil War, and the so-called heresy of Americanism that surfaced in the 1890s. In neither case, however, was the trouble faintly comparable to the current malaise in the depth and extent of the disarray that set in about 1966. In both of the previous instances no more than a minority of Catholics was involved, whereas today scarcely more than a handful remains untouched. No community, religious or otherwise, can prosper in such a divisive state, allowing always for the altogether justified differences of opinion that normally obtain among large groups. In 1854, Newman told Orestes Brownson:

> If there is one misery greater than another, it is division among Catholics. . . . If we have traitors among us, of course let them be duly dealt with—but, in cases where treason is not suspected, let us interpret each other's words *in meliorem partem*, and aim at cultivating that charity, which "thinketh no evil."

Alas, there is too little of that spirit in Catholic ranks at the present hour. Somehow or other, a basic unity must become once again a prime goal if the objectives of 1976 and the more pressing issues of the ensuing decade are to be realized.

MSGR. JOHN TRACY ELLIS

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"deepening fatalism" of the seventies was somewhat reversed by efforts like Call to Action and a more consultative pastoral style of church leadership, the doubts are on the rise once more. A decade's time, as Sister Alice Gallin pointed out at the symposium and Sally Cunneen of *Cross Currents* seconded, has only increased the skepticism many women feel toward official consultations. Nor has the church yet managed to welcome the growing number of Hispanic Catholics into effective conversation with the rest of the Catholic population.

The kind of national dialogue Call to Action attempted simply cannot be sporadic—or squeezed into a few days of debates and voting. Contrasting the accomplishments of Vatican II with those of some later synods, Msgr. George Higgins pointed to the dynamic that developed only as the Council fathers worked together over time. "If you are going to talk about collegiality, you are going to have to pay the price. And one of the prices is that it takes a lot of time and sweat."

The outstanding lesson of the Call to Action, however, has to do with the relationship between justice in society and justice in the church. Call to Action was originally addressed primarily to the former; it encountered its greatest difficulties when it addressed the latter. There is a good argument to be made for directing the church's justice efforts toward society at large: that is where the need appears most crying, that is where the church's leadership may enjoy the greatest consensus and face the fewest theological impasses. At the same time, it is tempting to interpret the concern with internal church issues as a distraction from the difficult social choices and personal sacrifices that the struggle for social justice generally might demand. Why not concentrate on a social justice agenda and trust that internal church issues will be resolved in the process?

The argument may be plausible, but history rebuts it. The prominence of internal church issues at Detroit was not simply a reflection of the delegates' backgrounds. "Church" was the area of concern that had elicited most responses in parish discussions as well. People will start with issues that affect them indirectly and with issues that they can affect directly. The needs of the poor, the challenge of peace, the protection of life, liberty, and justice for all simply will not be separated from the questions of how the community of Jesus' disciples treats each individual gathered around the table. "We cannot preach a justice to the world that we do not practice ourselves," said Cardinal Dearden in Detroit. Again and again, the church learns that liberty and justice begin at home.

Assessing the Call to Action in 1977, *Commonweal* called it "a social justice success but a theological disappointment." An ecclesiastical disappointment might have been a better way of expressing it. It was a disappointment that the church, as always, survived—but at the cost of lost energies and lost opportunities for overcoming the malaise and divisiveness that Msgr. John Tracy Ellis has frequently and eloquently lamented. Perhaps the time has come to repeat some part of the experiment of 1976. Call to Action's regional hearings were almost unanimously recognized as a success, and a similar broad form of consultation was incorporated into the drafting of recent pastoral letters. It is not, however, the testimony of "experts," so important for the pastorals, that is remembered from 1976, but the testimony of the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of ordinary people trying to live their faith. Perhaps a new set of such hearings would allow Catholics on all sides of the questions which divide us to articulate their hopes and anxieties about the church today. It would be done not only so that the bishops might hear us but that we might hear one another. We should not wait another two hundred years—or even another decade.

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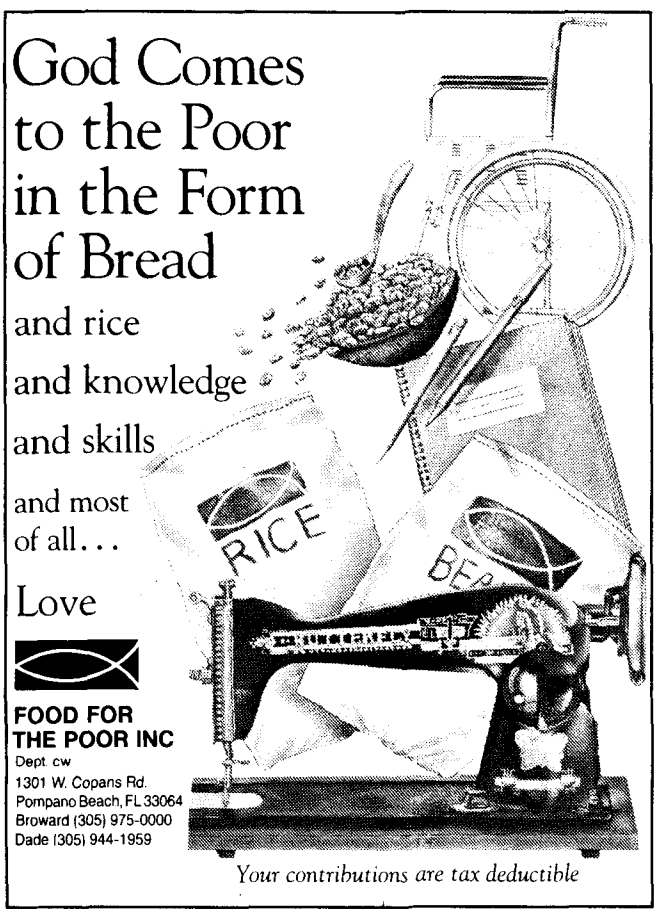

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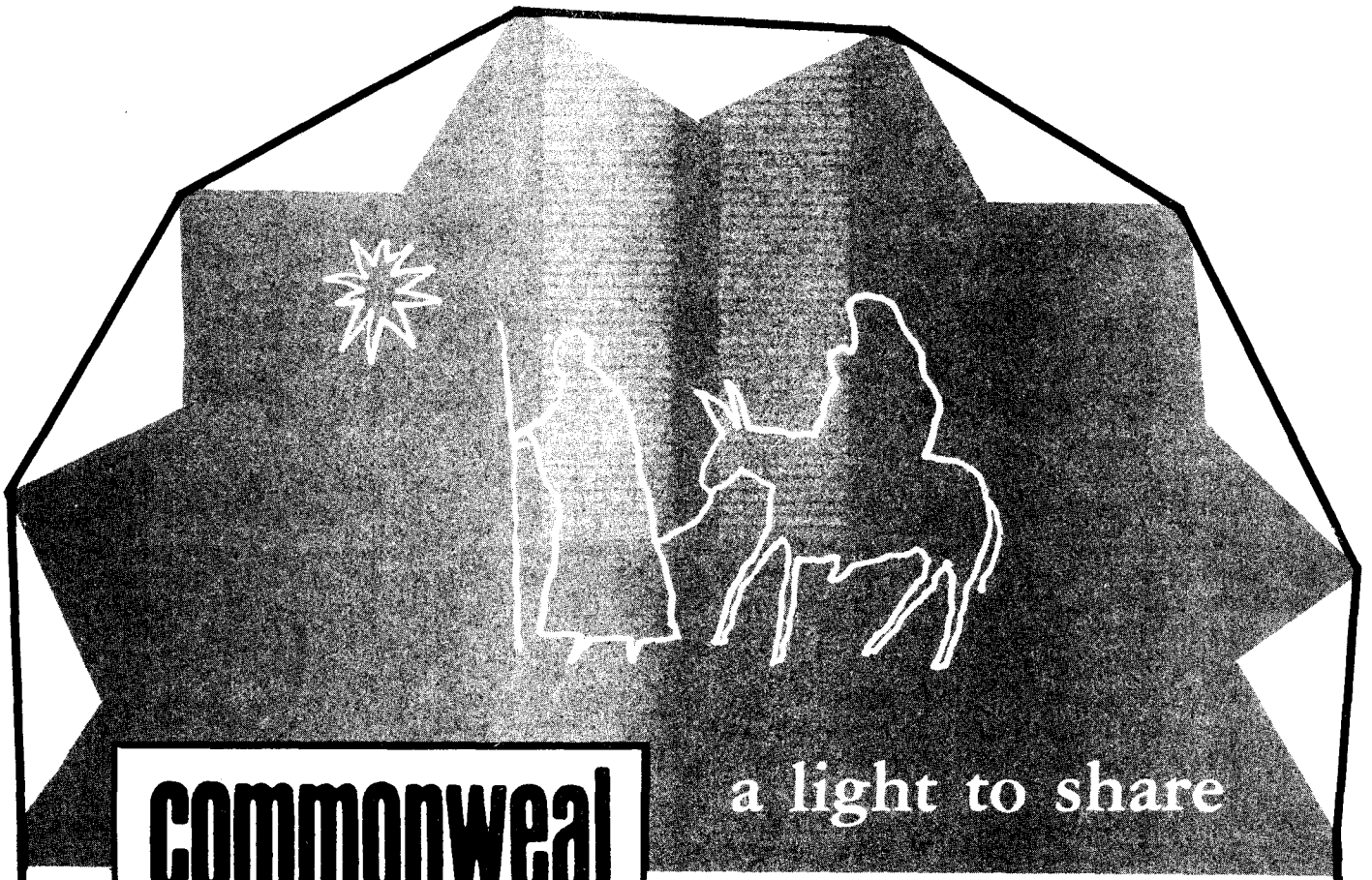

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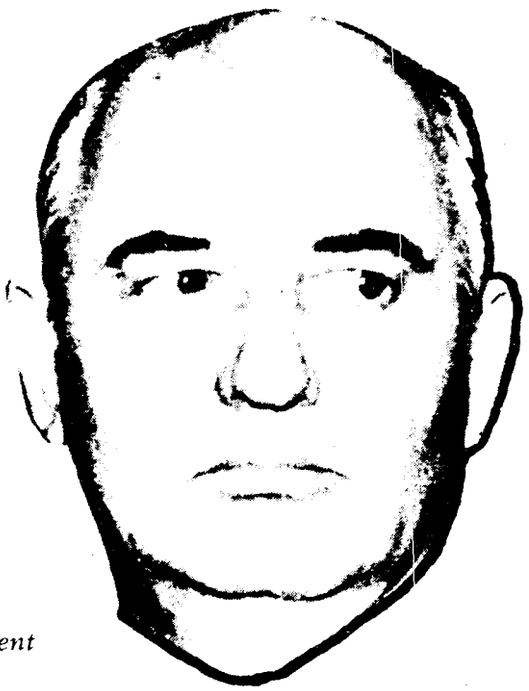

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